

VANTAGE

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DEDICATION

We dedicate the 2015 Providence College Art Journal to our senior thesis advisors, Dr. Thomas Strasser and Heather McPherson.

Without their guidance, this journal would not be a reality.

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ART HISTORY

Political Propaganda by the Madurai Nayakas: Minakshi – Sundaresvara Temple

RITA CALLAHAN



Figure 1. Ariel view of Minakshi Temple

Madurai, located in the southernmost state of India, is more affectionately known as “The Temple City” for its thousands of Hindu temples on almost every street corner (Fig. 2). Located in the center is the most famous Minakshi – Sundaresvara Temple (commonly referred to as Minakshi Temple). Minakshi and Sundaresvara (the local forms of the Hindu gods Parvathi and Shiva) have long stood as the main deities of the city. They are often considered to share authority with the present government. Initial construction of Minakshi Temple began with the Vijayanagara Empire (1336 – 1565 CE) with the construction of the two main shrines. The majority of the expansions surrounding the shrines were built by the reigning Madurai

Nayakas who came to power in 1565 CE. During the rule of the Nayakas, the Mughal Empire in the north experienced great success and witnessed growth in Muslim art and architecture. Significant patronage by the Hindu Nayakas developed a period of artistic growth in the state of Tamil Nadu, with works easily identifiable by their architectural and iconographic style. Prior to the 16th century royal portraiture was not a prevalent art form in Dravidian temples. It is with the Nayakas’ expansions to temples that images of kings and political dignitaries find their place within the temple walls. The new architectural developments and insertion of royal portraiture into temple construction by the Nayakas was for political propaganda.



Figure 2. Map of India

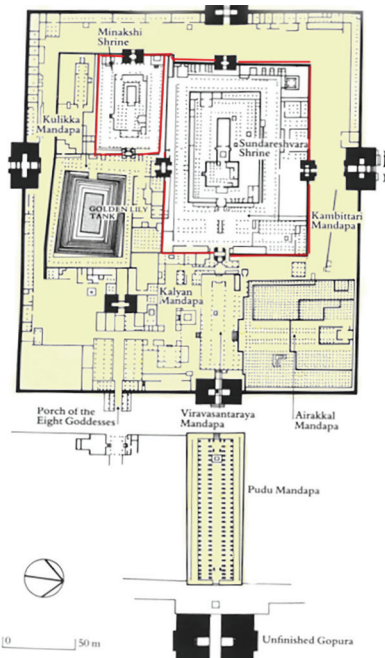


Figure 3. Floor Plan of Minakshi Temple

THE MYTH OF MINAKSHI

Minakshi's long presence in the sacred city of Madurai has established her as the main goddess of the land. The myth of Minakshi begins with an ancient Pandyan king and queen of Madurai. The queen was a faithful devotee of the goddess Parvathi, the consort of Shiva. One night, Parvathi, in the form of a young girl, came to the queen in her dream. Upon being asked her wishes, the queen requested that Parvathi be born to her in this same childlike form. In the following years the king and queen could not have a child, so they began performing *yagas* (holy fires). Parvathi then granted the queen her wish and appeared as a young girl in the fire.

Immediately the child ran from the fire to the lap of the queen. While happy to have a child, the king, looking for an heir to his throne was disappointed to see that it was not only a girl, but that she had three breasts. A divine voice then spoke to the king, telling him to raise the child as a fierce warrior and the third breast will disappear when she meets her husband. The king listened to this request and crowned the child as queen. The queen fought many battles on earth, defeating all her enemies. Unsatisfied, she then attacked Mount Kaila (Fig. 2), the home of Lord Shiva. Upon de-

feating all his soldiers, she then approached Shiva himself. Her third breast immediately disappeared. Knowing that this must be her fated husband, she dropped her weapons. The two fell in love and were married in Madurai, where they rule as Minakshi and Sundaresvara, the local forms of Parvathi and Shiva.¹

THE CREATION OF THE 'INTERSPACE'

With the long presence of these powerful gods in Madurai's history, it is understandable why so much attention and resources have been dedicated to their temple. The lengthy expansions of Minakshi Temple have resulted in a layout unlike other Dravidian style temples. The enlarged Temple has several *mandapams* (large halls) and processional spaces, separating the different areas of the temple with additional enclosure walls and four large gateway entrances with superstructures known as *gopuras*. Looking at the temple floor plan (Fig. 3) and structure formally, that the later additions to the temple, though individually constructed, enhance the connection of the worshippers to the deity by establishing a greater sacred ground for ritual movement. The *prakaram* or 'interspace' is the area between the outer walls of the Temple and the inner walls of the main shrine, highlighted in

yellow on figure 3. The additions by the Nayakas encourage more worshippers to spend time within the temple. The shared sovereignty between the Nayakas and the local deities was reinforced by allowing for political propaganda to be placed in the interspace through temple iconography. Instances of political propaganda are prominent in three areas of the temple. Puda Mandapam, a large hall outside of the main temple walls, the One Thousand Pillar Mandapam, in the north east corner of the temple, and the Golden Lilly Tank located in front of Minakshi's shrine.

Approaching the Minakshi Temple from the outer streets, little of the inside is visible. The massive outer walls and four large *gopuras* (built from 1570s-1590s) serve as a distinct marker between the sacred space of the temple and the profane space of the city streets. Standing five to seven stories tall, the *gopuras* signify the passage between the sacred and the profane that occurs during the entrance of the temple. The large towers are covered in stucco figures of gods, goddesses and mythical creatures, all representing the divine pantheon.

Once through the entrance of Minakshi Temple, the worshipper is now in the outer most enclosure of the temple, the interspace. In the

interspace that devotees circumambulate through the *mandapams*, going around the inner sanctums (outlined in red on fig. 3) instead of immediately walking straight to it. This circumambulation allows the devotee to appreciate the large amounts of edifices and iconography, helping in achieving the initial transition of mind from profane to sacred.² The interspace, however, is not considered the formal 'temple' but an extension of the temple proper (the *vimana*). By clearly acknowledging the difference between the enclosures, through the way they are designed and decorated, architects make the distinction between the final and completely transformed sacred ground of both Minakshi's and Sundaresvara's shrines and the interspace.

During the circumambulation, devotees enter through each *mandapam*, beginning at the east *gopura* and finishing in the One Thousand Pillar Mandapam (Fig. 4). Built in the early seventeenth century the *mandapam* is dimly lit and houses 985 columns seemingly spanning in every direction infinitely. With a surface area of 5000 m², it is dedicated to the cosmic form of Shiva, Nataraja (Lord of the Dance). Made with no limitations, the hall leaves the impression of overwhelming abundance.

The columned halls are often used for festi-

val celebrations and ritual processions. Worshippers fill the hall when the deity rests in the *mandapam* during festivals. The *mandapam* is constructed in a manner that allows for the easiest flow of movement. Typically rectangular in shape, a large processional aisle runs down the center, leading to the platform of the deity.³ The wide aisle creates a more open space during the processional and highlights the purpose of the hall. The *mandapams* were an addition to the complex that primarily focused on ritual movement rather than housing the deity. They are usually the sites of the most impressive stone sculpture in the complex. Carved in a way that interacts with the worshippers, The One Thousand Pillar Mandapam in Minakshi Temple houses statues of gods and goddesses, wealthy patrons, gypsies, and mythical creatures. All of whom are represented in local myths and ancient Hindu texts. Each one intricately carved in detail showing the skill of the sculptor. These ornate sculpture piers have become a sign of Nayakas artistic influence.

The final area of the interspace before entering the shrines of the deities is the long corridor in front of Minakshi's shrine. Therefore entire *prakaram* is filled with images of deities, heroes and *yalis* (mythical lion creatures) carved and painted

from the floors to the ceilings. The concept that Hindu temples are houses for the gods, removes the emphasis on congregational worship and instead places it on the paths and spaces used for ritual movement. The additional spaces used for circumambulation can be understood as functional for both the devotee moving inwards towards the main shrines and for the deity coming out to the people.⁴ During festivals the deities move from their shrine around the temple and city, highlighting the processional layout of the Temple. More frequently, worshippers who enter the temple utilize the paths working inwards as they circumambulate around the main shrines and throughout the entire temple. During the circumambulation the devotee witnesses the images portrayed throughout the interspace, achieving the transition of mind and witnessing the strategically placed propaganda by the Nayakas.

Within the interspace, a large amount of attention was paid to the surface decoration, especially columns. With the construction of the large *mandapams*, there was an increasing focus on the columns and piers that support them. The large blocks are wider at the top and further apart at the base, leading to a more spacious *mandapam*.⁵ The rectangular piers allowed for more variety in design

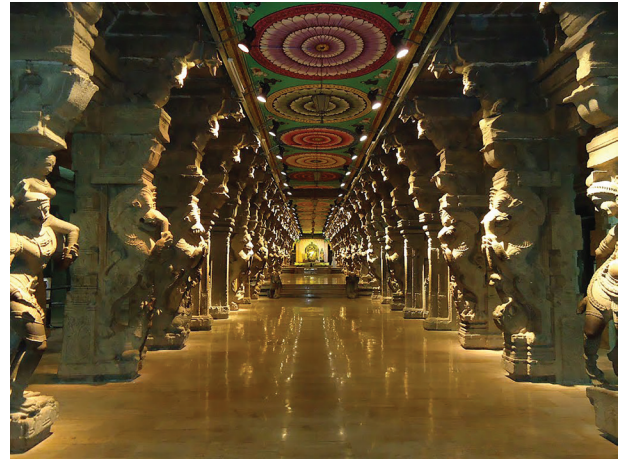


Figure 4. One Thousand Pillar Mandapam



Figure 5. Sculptural piers, One Thousand Pillar Mandapam, Granite



Figure 6. Rajendra Chola I sculpture at Brihadeeswara Temple

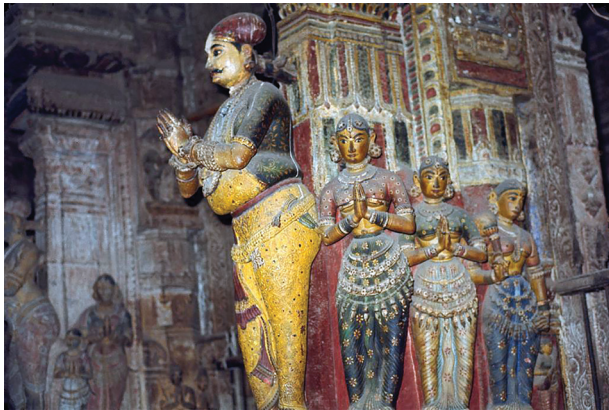


Figure 7. Portrait of Nayakas Kings, Puda Mandapam, Granite Sculpture.

(Fig. 5). By carving the shaft almost entirely, they can be made into inspiring works of art. It is the inspiring impact of the repetitive, ornate piers and carvings that achieve the purpose of influencing the devotee in their faith of the gods and the Nayakas.

NAYAKAS ROYAL PATRONAGE

Due to construction costs, large temples servicing the communities were typically built by royalty. The temples provided a space for the community to worship and express their devotion of the ruler to the gods. These acts, however, were more of a display of physical power and economic wealth. During the Nayakas Empire, the massive amount of patronage of the arts and temple construction seem less of an act of piety and more an exertion of power. The Nayakas primarily funded temple expansions rather than constructing on open plots of land. This served as a way to connect their rule to that of their predecessors as well as the divine. The stone construction of temples is the gift that creates a foundation for the shared sovereignty of the deity and the king. South Indian Chola Emperors, whose dynasty lasted from 300 BCE till 1279 CE, built many of the great Tamil temples, but they did not leave the same dominat-

ing portraits like the Nayakas in Madurai. Chola kings left little evidence of individual histories while the Nayakas constructed life size portraits of themselves and even their predecessors on the same scale of the divine.

This can be seen by a sculpture on the great South Indian Chola Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. The sculpture depicts the patron king of the Temple Rajendra Chola I being garlanded by the Shiva (Fig. 6). The hierarchal scale shows a clear difference from Nayakas sculpture.

ROYAL PORTRAITURE IN NAYAKAS TAMIL NADU

Portraiture was not established in South Asian sculpture until the Nayakas in the 16th century. Before then royal portraiture was restricted to small wall paintings or textiles depicting kings in courtly, erotic and private settings. The presence of portraiture in Indian sculpture was rare and always small scale. The king was never seen as the same size as a deity, but depicted standing alone on the same levels as the gods. In a religious subject, any presence of a particular individual would always be a subordinate figure represented too small to have detail or any mark of individuality. Portraits are recognized by their secular dress and hand gesture

of devotion, *anjalimurda*.⁶ This is a significantly different portrayal than those of the Nayakas. A shift from the use of subtle inscriptions to large portrait sculptures displays the intention of the Nayakas to make themselves visible to daily worshippers. This prominence would have instilled a greater sense of relationship between the people of Madurai and their emperors (Fig. 6). During the reign of the Nayakas there was a constant threat of invasion by neighboring kingdoms, and multiple war-zones surrounded the city.⁷ While these may not always have been direct threats, the constant insecurity was calmed by the visual presence of an enlightened and strong emperor.

Prominent South Indian royal portraits began with the development of figural sculpture piers. Indian piers are often constructed with figural sculptures attached to inner side. During the 16th century the technical and artistic abilities of artists allowed the partially sculpted piers to become three-dimensional sculptures hardly attached to the pier they are carved from (Fig. 5).⁸ With this development the large pier sculptures of royals became not only possible but also popular. The presence of the sculptures on their own is less significant than looking at the portraits within the temple context, which highlights the relationship

of the kings to temples and their deities. The portrait sculptures portrayed in the Minakshi Temple were for the most part constructed during the lifetime of their models. Consequently, the sculptures were recognizable by the general public as the present royalty. Today the iconography identifies the figures as royalty rather than gods or common folk. The portraits are in contemporary dress, ornate jewelry and headdresses, with their bodies well fed and in a relaxed posture. The most obvious indication that they are not divine figures however is their devotional hand gesture, known as *anjalimurda*.

Portraiture in Minkakshi Temple is much more prevalent than other South Indian temples due to the Nayakas additions and vested interest in showing their presence. Therefore, not only an occasional wall-painting (though many are no longer present) but large figural sculpture piers depict life size royal portraiture throughout the temple. Puda Mandapam is a large hall that sits outside of the current temple walls. Built in 1635 by one of the last emperors of the Nayakas, Tirumala. The *mandapam* was intended to be a part of the next expansion of the temple, but it was never completed. The hall has a large center aisle flanked by two small side aisles and is filled with traditional images of

deities, *yalis*, and surprisingly a lineage of Nayakas emperors (Fig. 7). Flanking the center aisle are the large piers sculpted into portraits that arrange the rulers in chronological order. The emperors are distinguished by their large stomachs, royal garb and hands in *anjalimurda*.⁹

The Hindu temple is not designed for communal worship, instead it is viewed as a house for the gods. The main purpose for Hindus visiting the temple is that one may approach the deity and witness the divine essence. Known as *darshana*, the physical act of seeing the divine and them seeing the worshipper is the culmination of devotion.¹⁰ A visual recreation of the god allows the deity to be approachable to man and connect the devotee to their faith. This important aspect of Hinduism can be seen in the intricate and detailed carvings of the eyes of the king sculptures in Puda Mandapam, whose deep-set eyes are visible to even a far away viewer. The sculptures are life-size reaching 1.7 m tall in addition to sitting on a base that is 1.5 m above ground level. Showing the importance of depicting authority over reality are the multiple queens at the sides of each king, constructed on a much smaller scale. The large stature of the kings allows them to look down on the viewer, making it questionable who the devotional

gesture is intended.

According to Branfoot, the placement of these figures in a main festival processional area (noting the importance of movement within a temple) suggests that the rulers are strategically placed to greet the deity, as it would move in front of them.¹¹ When the deity is raised on a throne during festivals, the kings would be at the same height and able to worship. While this is a valid argument, so too is the importance of the location as a processional space for daily worshippers. The large portraits are not solely placed out for festivals when the deity would be moving. Every day when a worshipper visits the temple, they are confronted by a life size depiction of their ruler. These portraits would have had an impact on the general public, as it became a reoccurring theme in their temple worship. These sculptures show the Nayakas claim to their own divinity or at the very least the notion that the kings are on the same level as the deities. The visual recreation of the Hindu gods allows the divine to be approachable to man and connect the devotee to their faith, in the same way that these recreations of royalty would make them welcoming to the worshippers. Standing on their own, at the same level and scale as the deities surrounding them in the hall, makes a clear statement by

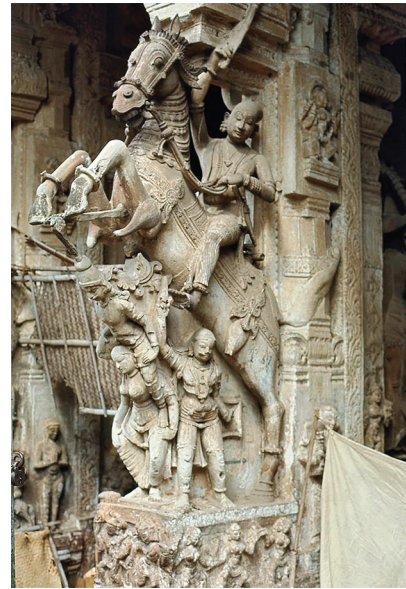


Figure 8. Tirumala Nayakas on horse-back, Pudamandapam, granite sculpture



Figure 9. The marriage of Minakshi and Sundaresvara, Golden Lilly Tank, wall painting.

the Nayakas. The portraits are placed within the temple complexes and assert themselves as the living presence of divine power to serve the general public.

Military scenes are a way to illustrate connections between the lives of the rulers and building of temples. In the One Thousand Pillar Mandapam, many believe the male sculptures on the columns to be military warriors serving for the Nayakas. In addition to these men, there is a sculpture at the entrance to the hall of the main patron, Ariyanatha Mudaliar, the prime minister and general to Viswanatha Nayak, the first Nayakas of Madurai (1559–1600). He was a great leader who helped develop the region through construction and authority. At the entrance of the 1,000 Pillar Mandapam is a statue of Ariyanatha Mudaliar seated on horse-back.¹² The sculpture is also debated to be Lord Sundareswara, but whomever the sculpture may be the local legend and adoration of the sculpture as Ariyanatha shows his political influence to the point of deification. His influence on the Nayakas Empire lasted until his death, and now has a cult status in southern Tamil Nadu, where he is the patron figure among many regional groups. This depiction of Ariyanatha is similar to the statue of Tirumala Nayakas outside of Puda

Mandapam where he is also portrayed on horse-back (Fig. 8). These sculptures show the political figures as warriors and protectors of the people, in the same way as Hindu deities. Branfoot notes Krautheimer's theory of:

The architectural copy joined with the notion of symbolism both to the intentions of the patron and to the response of the medieval onlooker...The associative power of architectural forms could thus be used by patrons to promote devotion, evoke holy sites, or...make political propaganda.¹³

This indicates the power in architecture to convey a message from the patron to the daily worshipers. The Nayakas did exactly this. The representation of Tirumala and Ariyanatha both imply the power of the form to promote both devotional and political propaganda.

One of the few remaining examples of painted royal portraits in the temple rests in a small portico on the western side of the Golden Lily Tank, it depicts the marriage of Minakshi and Sundaresvara attended by the Nayakas queen Rani Mangammal and her grandson, heir to the throne (Fig. 9).¹⁴ Present in the center of the painting are Minakshi, in her green fish eyed goddess form, and Sundaresvara beside her, painted white. The two are being wed by Vishnu (painted in blue),

Minakshi's brother and one of the three principle deities of Hinduism. In the bottom right corner, Queen Mangammal and her grandson can be distinguished by their secular garb (lack of divine headdress) and their *anjali murda* hand gesture. While the queen is off to the side of the painting and smaller to the principle deities, she is on the same scale as the rest of the gods in the divine pantheon. Were it not for her lack of divine headdress, she could not be distinguished from the crowd. This painting implies a personal connection of the queen to the divine. Therefore directly linking the power of the Nayakas to that of Minakshi and Sundaresvara, working as political propaganda inside the temple.

The Hindu temple is not solely connected to spiritual life. Mitchell expresses this when he writes, "The temple is the most characteristic artistic expression of Hinduism providing a focus for both the social and spiritual life of the community it serves".¹⁵ Devotees typically visit a temple once a day if not more, representing an important aspect of daily life and social interaction. Hours are spent with family and neighbors eating and worshipping in the temple complex. The presence of royal portraiture in the processional areas of the interspace would be constantly visible to devotees during

their large amounts of social time spent inside the temple.

CONCLUSION

Architecture was the Nayakas' most powerful artistic tool. Their temple construction resulted in a clear distinction between the sacred and the profane. The *mandapams* within the interspace created a new element to Minakshi Temple that included a transition area between the outside world and ultimate sacred space. The power of this space, is in its symbolism. The interspace represents the area where earthly beings surrounded by temptation are brought to enlightenment. Political portraiture in this space signifies that the Nayakas emperors are able to assist the people of Madurai in this process, but they also offer the same protection and enlightenment as the gods in the divine pantheon.

By erecting additions to the Minakshi Temple, the Nayakas created a space to host worshippers and their own politically motivated portraiture. The sculptured piers in Puda Mandapam and the 1,000 Pillar Mandapam and in paintings throughout the Temple forged a connection between the Nayakas and the long-standing deities of the city, Minakshi and Sundaresvara. Establishing

this connection gave the public a view of their emperors as enlightened, stable beings like the well-respected gods. The implied connections between the Nayakas and the deities show their divine right to rule and emphasize the shared sovereignty between the two. This was crucial to the Nayakas whose empire was not as stable as their large patronage of the arts would suggest. By creating an association with the divine powers who protect the people, the Nayakas were seen in the same light. Entering the temple brought the Nayakas directly into the heart of the people, stabilizing the public's faith in the empire.

GLOSSARY

Anjalimurda – A devotional hand gesture used by devotees as they approach the deities. The pressing together of the palms is a sign of respect and subservience which is also commonly used between people of different social status.

Minakshi – The local South Indian/Tamil Nadu form of the goddess Parvathi.

Sundaresvara – The local South Indian/Tamil Nadu form of the god Shiva.

Yaga – A holy fire created for prayer.

Darashana – The act of seeing, usually in reference to seeing the idol of the gods.

Puja – Ritual offerings to the gods performed by Brahmin priests.

Mandapam - Large pillared halls in a Hindu temple.

Gopura – Multi-storied superstructures above the entrances to a temple; typical of Dravidian style architecture.

Prakaram – The area of the temple between the outer enclosure and the main shrine; also known as the interspace.

Vimana – The superstructure above the main shrines.

Yali – Mythical beast like creatures with either the body or head of a lion combined with other animal.

ENDNOTES

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PERSONAL SEXUAL NARRATIVES IN THE WORK OF LOUISE BOURGEOIS AND TRACY EMIN

CAITLIN COOR

Inspired by the utopian ideals of twentieth-century activist and modernist movements, feminist artists sought to change the world around them through their work. They focus on disrupting the established art world, the art historical canon, as well as everyday social interactions. Issues of female sexuality and identity are addressed by concentrating on the works of two prolific contemporary female artists, Louise Bourgeois and Tracey Emin. It discusses the recurring themes prevalent in feminist art and marks a shift from second to third wave feminism.

Louise Bourgeois, recognized as the creator of confessional art,¹ is considered one of the most influential contemporary female artists. Her work is mostly autobiographical and frequently confronts feminist concerns through reference to the male and female body. These themes are examined in the work, *Mamelles* (Fig. 1), which express concerns around societal perceptions of the body. Like Bourgeois, the work of Tracey Emin, considered the inheritor of Bourgeois' legacy, concentrates on subjects such as sex, abortion, and rape, seen

through a feminist lens. This analysis focuses primarily on Emin's *Suffer Love XI* (Fig. 3). Finally, a collaborative piece, *I Wanted to Love You More* (Fig. 4) serves as both the literal and contextual connection between the two artists. Although Bourgeois and Emin are of different generations, their art is charged by similar personal experiences as well as thoughts on the gender and sexual landscape of their time.

"Confessional Art"—a category created by Bourgeois, and carried out by Emin -- focuses on an intentional revelation of the self, encouraging an intimate analysis of the artist.² It emerged in the late 20th century and is considered a consistent approach for producing art that mimics, reconsiders and departs from the conventional modes of confession used in the Roman Catholic tradition, autobiographical literature and psychoanalysis.³ When considering the popularity of confessional art in contemporary culture, it is evident that this phenomenon has prompted individuals to create their own truths.

LOUISE BOURGEOIS BIOGRAPHY

In an attempt to overcome the past, emotions inherent in Bourgeois' work is emotion. Her goal was to provoke reactions rather than reference intellectual theory.⁴ Each artwork poses questions for the viewer to consider, as her imagery often appears ambiguous. Bourgeois was ahead of her time, introducing gendered metaphors within her work well before gender issues were considered in the public arena. She was a pioneer in the visual field of exploration of gender-based stereotypes initiated by second wave feminism beginning with Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking book, *The Second Sex*, of 1949.⁵ These stereotypes included the shifting social roles and status of women, the power of the phallus in conjunction with the male gaze, and the examination of the female body and sexuality for the first time by a female, as an individual.

A Paris native, Bourgeois moved to New York in 1938 and began to focus primarily on sculpture. Although her work was exhibited alongside that of her male counterparts in the New York art world of the 1940s and 1950s, she was often overlooked and criticized for not following the popular trends of the Abstract Expressionists.⁶ In a time when white American male painters were creating large and aggressive works, her work deviated in express-

ing a disregard for the symbolic order of patriarchal society.⁷ Bourgeois' oeuvre is heavily inspired by her childhood memories and experiences. Her struggles are, in a way, controlled when simplified into a work of art.

BOURGEOIS AND EMIN: A SHARED PEROGATIVE

Bourgeois' purgative way to turn her traumas into creative acts that at the same time give her additional strength makes it possible to link her to Tracey Emin. She is also considered one of the few artists capable of revealing the intimate details of her life in an extremely powerful and honest manner. Emin presents the viewer with her hopes, failures, success, and humiliations that contain both tragic and humorous elements. This level of vulnerability connects with the audience in a way other art cannot. While honestly revealing controversial and often alarming truths about society through her narrative, she exposes the struggles of forming an identity in today's world. Her unashamed audaciousness with regard to female sexuality, as well, as its deeply personal reference points, may be aligned with the ideas and issues associated with third wave feminism beginning in the 1990s. In this context, no issue of the body is off the table, and is presented without artifice or humiliation.

Similarly, it could be argued that Emin redefines what it means to be a maternal being, in addition to what it means to be a woman, through her artistic persona. On a superficial level, her personality rejects preconceived notions of feminine behavior. She is very vocal and opinionated, and often brutally explicit. Her dynamic personality can be seen as a rejection of the passive role expected of women in society, gaining her both endorsement and notoriety in the art world.⁸

BOURGEOIS BODY OF WORK

The subject matter of Bourgeois' work is almost always connected to human anatomy, and comments on gender roles and stereotypes. It is often categorized as biomorphic, evoking the sculptural shapes of living organisms. Bourgeois' suggestive organ-like contours and early use of unconventional materials such as resin, latex, and cloth, allude to the tension between quintessentially male and female forms (Fig. 2). This recurrent interrogation of the male and female dialectic aligns Bourgeois with the Feminist movement, but psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan heavily influenced her work as well as she pointedly embraced or rejected their ideas.⁹

Since the 1940s and 1950s, Lacan formu-

lated a theory suggesting the "patriarchal framework of language is a means to determine sexual difference."¹⁰ Bourgeois' work focuses on overcoming this patriarchal symbolic order. By combining imagery associated with the sexes, she undermines their symbolism. For example, the early work titled *Cumul I* (Fig. 2) appears overtly sexual but at the same time, maintains a certain degree of ambiguity. The viewer is confronted with a cluster of mounds that resemble breasts and penises emerging from a rippling fabric. Like these, imagery seen throughout the work of Bourgeois is neither entirely masculine nor wholly feminine. Nicoletta argues that through this deconstruction,

[t] his semiotic breaks all binary oppositions concerning power and possession within society, decentering the subject and destroying established cultural beliefs and institutions.¹¹

Bourgeois further implied that the Freudian concept of a traumatized childhood was the catalyst for her artistic motives. The artist has confirmed that all of her work found inspiration in her youth. Scholars have noted that the childhood traumas of having a sick mother and philandering father, who maintained an affair with her nanny, had a powerful impact on the young Bourgeois. References to Bourgeois' family and sexuality de-



Figure 1. Louise Bourgeois, *Mamelles*, 1991, rubber, fiberglass and wood.



Figure 2. Louise Bourgeois, *Cumul I*, 1969, white marble on wood base.

veloped over the span of her career into a personal artistic vocabulary.

Bourgeois has always been preoccupied with themes of motherhood and female sexuality through references to human anatomy. *Mamelles* (Fig. 1), for example, is explicit in its allusion to the female form. Made from rubber, fiberglass and wood, this eleven-foot relief runs horizontally across the wall. Linear in structure, the piece resembles a classical frieze. The sixteen pink breasts within the constructs of the form contradict the regimented and classical quality typical of this type of presentation. The tension between the lines of the structure and the curved undulations within them is indicative of the distinct tension within most of Bourgeois' work. These contradictions are exaggerated by the frank nature of the piece, as the breasts appear to be pouring out of the frame, imposing itself on the space of the viewer.

In this object, Bourgeois highlights the sexual objectification of the female body. By focusing primarily on a specific part of the female anatomy, reference to identity is eliminated and simplified to an object to be consumed. While the imagery of female breasts connotes the nurturing role associated with motherhood, the forms are presented in a vulnerable and exposed manner, alluding to the

masculine gaze implied in any objectified exposition of the female body. Bourgeois has stated that the work references the theme of female commodification:

[*Mamelles*] portrays a man who lives off the woman he courts, making his way from one to the next. Feeding from them but returning nothing, he loves only in a consumptive and selfish manner.¹²

In concert with the linear appearance of the work and the idea of consumption, *Mamelles* resembles a feeding trough, for livestock. The only purpose of these forms is to satisfy the pleasure of others. In addition to commenting on the traditional male perspective of the female body, the idea of male satisfaction is a prevalent theme used by Bourgeois that is usually associated with her childhood experiences. She frequently indicates the dichotomy between the role of women as mother or mistress:

In France, the woman is always the mother. Most men remain children and marry mother figures. For eroticism, they have mistresses. Physically, my father was too afraid or guilty to make love to my mother. My father was promiscuous and it had a profound effect on all of us.¹³

This personal struggle is personified in *Mamelles* and for that reason, it is important to note the impact of the extramarital affairs of her father throughout her childhood. In a passage about her upbringing, she acknowledges the tension within her parents' marriage after her mother contracted the Spanish influenza in 1918:

After that, maybe their sex life was not quite the same, not as it had been. It was then that my father looked at other women, looked. His behavior became very, very childish. Immature. Not childish, but immature. After the war, the First World War, he was desperately trying to find peace, and women were his way of doing so.¹⁴

By admitting to the struggles within her parent's marriage and her resentment for her father's behavior, it appears that *Mamelles* was a way in which Bourgeois was able to cope with such realities, and to contextualize it as a universal phenomenon in the context of her work. To paraphrase an important 2nd wave feminist observation, the personal becomes the political.

EMIN SUFFERS LOVE AND LIFE

Much like *Mamelles* in its explicit nature, *Suffer Love XI* (Fig. 3) by Emin is an overt presentation of female sexuality, but taken to a confes-

sional extreme. This print is one still from Emin's flipbook style animated film of a woman masturbating called *Those Who Suffer Love*. Emin's earlier work often revolved around ideas of sexual excess. This piece, however, connotes the artist's realization of lack of fertility and lack of sexual drive, and her attempts to adapt as an aging woman. Although the image depicts a masturbation scene and immediately connotes ideas of sexuality, for Emin, masturbation is not only about the act of self-love but more about "self-loathing and being alone and for the act of being alone." While *Suffer Love XI* clearly exhibits the artist's naked body as she arches her back and pulls her legs apart, this does not serve to highlighting her sexual availability. Emin omits the head from the figure and presents herself from a foreshortened frontal view, emphasizing her vulnerability and ironically, objectification. She is alienated from herself, watching herself and her actions.

The sexually explicit nature of the image inevitably conjures ideas of the 'male gaze.' The emphasis on the crotch can be argued to function as a, "mirror that secures male subjectivity."¹⁵ The open-legged pose of the figure also mimics the posture of the body in childbirth and thus emphasizes the reproductive function of the woman. As this

gesture once signified the artist's sexual availability, it now connotes the loss and loneliness associated with failed procreativity. Like Bourgeois, Emin introduces her personal narrative into her art. She admits that her images are of herself and that their purpose is to show others what she has experienced:

The fact that I want people to look at the drawings is that I want people to confront what I've had to confront – what other people have.

Through the confrontation of personal experience and confession, her art pushes the viewer to challenge and reassess innermost thoughts, assumptions and perspectives that they might not otherwise entertain.¹⁶

In Betterton's analysis of maternal images in contemporary art produced by women, she postulates the reconfiguration of motherly embodiment through the field of visual studies.¹⁷ In reference to the way in which Emin expresses her sexuality, some scholars read these images as transgressive metaphors. Emin rejected the traditional ideal of a maternal being by choosing not to have children. Instead she focuses on developing her legacy through artistic creation and her oeuvre is a physical manifestation of that legacy. She acts

out her role as mother through the creation of her art. It is highly intimate and personal, and much of her most sexually explicit imagery, as in *Suffer Love*, evokes the notion of the viewer and the artist looking inside of her. By the continual reproduction of the self through her work, her maternal role is manifested through her artistic expressions, not through the act of bearing a child. Emin has publicly acknowledged that she will never be a mother, yet she adapts this role through an intimate relationship with her work, the viewer, and her sexuality.

THE COLLABORATION

The joint exhibition piece of Bourgeois and Emin, titled *Do Not Abandon*, was the result of a collaborative project directed toward the female body. Bourgeois initially reached out to Emin and handed over a set of sixteen-gouache male and female torsos for Emin to complete. After almost a year and a half, the torsos evolved into raw images adorned with Emin's trademark mirror writing. These images, depicting erect phalluses and inscriptions such as "You kept fucking me" express intimate female emotions attached to love and loss. The work titled *I Wanted to Love You More* (Fig. 4) pictorialize the dichotomy between overt sexuality



Figure 3. Tracey Emin, *Suffer Love XI*, 2009, monoprint on paper.

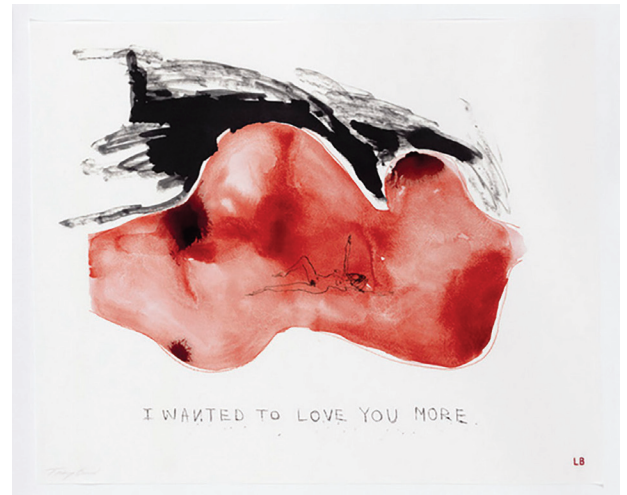


Figure 4. Louise Bourgeois and Tracey Emin, *I Wanted to Love You More*, 2009, archival dyes printed on cloth.

and eroticism with implications of life, death and the maternal. The works as a whole epitomize the intersection of both artists' confessional and audacious autobiographical styles.

I Wanted to Love You More represents the birth of self rather than a reference to procreation. With a palette of reds, pinks, black, and blue on white cloths, the female bodies represented are not idealized or objectified bodies, but appear to be lived in, portrayed in a rough and quick formal style. Emin's additions to the images are coarsely drawn, wiry, miniature female figures and text that interact within and around the painted forms. Perhaps where the older artist, Bourgeois, has come to terms with the real complexity inherent in the inconspicuous dichotomies expressed in their work, Emin, is still grappling with them. She injects a more present sense of pain and longing into the pieces. Their artistic collaboration results in something more than the expression of sexuality so characteristic of both of them. Bourgeois, in the act of giving Emin her paintings, provides her with the space to articulate herself as a complex woman. In a paradigmatic parallel, Bourgeois signs each of the pieces by stitching her initials neatly into the works, while Emin leaves a quick signature in pencil.

CONCLUSION

Although the works of both Bourgeois and Emin are self-referential and inspired by personal experiences, they resonate with a large audience and reveal the human condition of modern life. Jabri argues:

The self portrayed is a troubled, fragmented being, aware of her place within the dominant matrices of social life while articulating a subjectivity, a form of self-expression that defies the limits of discourse and power.¹⁸

Both Bourgeois and Emin reject the passive female role in their use of confessional art and through a powerfully active voice. They assert themselves by using their own lives and bodies as subject matter, controlling their past experiences and altering the future. Although the works of Bourgeois and Emin appear to be self-centered, they are revelations of the realities that many women experience. By initiating conversation and pushing the boundaries of female sexuality and gender constructs, they question society's preconceived notions of female identity. The demystification of sexual relationships through the work of Freud and others eventually changed the way in which society viewed sex acts and contextualized them as expressions of identity and its formation. One could

conclude that through confessional expressions in art and other media, society is able to explore feelings surrounding controversial issues and move toward a greater shared understanding of the human social condition.

ENDNOTES

¹Richard Dorment. "Louise Bourgeois Invented Confessional Art." *The Telegraph*. (2010). N.p.

²Christine Fanthone. "The Influence and Treatment of Autobiography In Confessional Art: Observations On Tracey Emin's Feature Film Top Spot." *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 29.1 (2006), 30.

³Michael Hogg, and Ronald L. Jackson. *Encyclopedia of Identity*. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 123.

⁴Julie Nicoletta. "Louise Bourgeois's Femmes-Maisons: Confronting Lacan." *Woman's Art Journal* 13 (1992), 22.

⁵Martha Rampton. "Three Waves of Feminism." *Pacific Magazine Fall* (2008), 1-2.

⁶The waves of feminism can be defined both in terms of generations and the concerns addressed by each specific "wave". The first wave of feminism took place during the 19th century and was mainly concerned with female voting rights. Second wave feminism happened mainly in the mid-20th century, the concerns addressed were usually bodily rights. Differing perspectives of cultural minorities were taken into consideration at this point, Bell Hooks is a notable person in terms of this shift. Third wave feminism is concerned mainly with equality and is the focus task of women coming of age in the 21st century. It was kicked off by the grrrls of the 1990s. There is of course crossover between the so-called "waves" and differing cultural perspectives.

⁷ibid 24.

⁸ibid 21.

⁹Outi Remes. "Replaying The Old Stereotypes Into An Artistic Role: The Case Of Tracey Emin." *Woman's History Review* 18.4 (2009), 11.

¹⁰Nicoletta Julie. "Louise Bourgeois's Femmes-Maisons: Confronting Lacan." *Woman's Art Journal* 13 (1992), 21.

¹¹ibid 21.

¹²ibid 24.

¹³Charlotta Kotik. "Louise Bourgeois: An Introduction." *Louise Bourgeois: Recent Work*, exhibition catalogue, New York, 1993.

¹⁴Louise Bourgeois, and Marie-Laure Bernadac and Hans Ulrich Obrist. *Destruction of the Father Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT in Association with Violette Editions, 1998), 226.

¹⁵ibid 164.

¹⁶Hilary Robinson. *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray: The Politics of Art by Women*. (London: I.B. Tauris 2006), 58-59.

¹⁷Fanthome Christine. "The Influence And Treatment Of Autobiography In Confessional Art: Observations On Tracey Emin's Feature Film Top Spot." *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 29.1 (2006), 42.

¹⁸Betterton, Rosemary. "Promising Monsters: Pregnant Bodies, Artistic Subjectivity, And Maternal Imagination." *Hypatia* 21.2 (2006), 80-100.

¹⁹Vivienne Jabri. "The Self in Women As Subject Of Art And Politics." *International Feminist Journal Of Politics* 4.1 (2002), 125.

ANDY WARHOL: MARGINALIZATION, CHILDHOOD ILLNESS AND PERFORMATIVITY IN PORTRAITURE

NICOLE LANIA

Andy Warhol's career was marked by stories. Namely, narratives made up by the artist in order to deflect the truth.¹ Warhol and his works embody cold, lifeless mechanization. While Warhol was largely producing much of his corpus during the space age and the advent of modern technology, there is something more ominous than industrialization at large in his work. He created a persona apart from himself for the public. In order to understand Warhol and the man beneath the haze of his performative identity, his biography must be taken into careful consideration. His biography, in conjunction with a psychoanalytic approach, serves as background for how and why he developed certain stylistic leanings. Particularly, his incidences of childhood illness may shed light on many of the setbacks Warhol encountered. The traumas of his biography are most glaring in his treatment of portraiture; a genre that, he repeated throughout his oeuvre. Illness, in particularly those experienced during childhood can be damaging. In addition to a history of childhood illness, Warhol lived a life marked by turbulence. Some

prevailing concerns from Warhol's past include: his homosexuality, his body image and his interaction with mass tragedies of the Post-modern era. The manner by which he addressed turmoil in his life is a telling clue, regarding the treatment of his illness. St. Vitus Dance, the ailment he suffered as a child is a largely inconspicuous aspect of his identity. Portraiture is genre by which he most clearly interacts with personal matters. Warhol articulates the ghosts of his past in his mistreatment of portraiture and its repetition.

In his introduction to *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, Kynaston McShine argues that Warhol was preordained for a life on the margins due in part to his Carapatho-Rusyn (Ruthenian), Catholic background.² His immigrant, working class family could not be any more different than the "beautiful" people he captured on canvas in later years. Even at a young age, Warhol seemed to embody the notion of an outsider in his persona.

WARHOL'S MARGINALIZED IDENTITY

Warhol was born in 1928 to a Pittsburgh mining family. The Rusyn or Ruthenian people are an ethnic sub-group who lived in the state of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Germany, and Ukraine. This group now lives mainly within the modern geographic boundaries of Ukraine. They, however, did not adopt a Ukrainian identity. The Warhola family emigrated from a Slovakian region populated by Rusyns.³

While this could have been an aspect of his identity that caused him to feel as if he were an outsider, he normalized this. The area where he grew up had a very large Central and Eastern European population. His neighborhood in Pittsburgh was known as “Ruska Dolina” or the Rusyn Valley.

Warhol made note of this in his own book, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. He noted tremendous difficulty making human connections. While it is dubious whether the insights in Warhol's book are indeed truthful, there is likely some level of honesty in his words. He recounted a childhood memory of his mother reading him comics in Rusyn-accented English and begrudgingly saying “Thanks Mom” when she had finished.⁴ He held some resentment, particularly

for his mother's immigrant status. Despite this, Warhol maintained a strong relationship with his mother throughout his life. This relationship to his mother and comics was memorialized in his work, Dick Tracy (Fig. 1).⁵ He spent more time with his mother and his comics than with his peers. It remains distressing that during Warhol's childhood, and life, he never felt he made any true friends.⁶ In his article for *Arts Magazine*, “The Metaphysical Nose Job,” Bradford Collins also remarks on the nature of Warhol's youthful social interactions. Collins goes on to note that his search for friendship lead to a desire for Warhol to be freed from troubles of the human heart.⁷ He also takes stock of the fact that Warhol voiced profound feelings of isolation.⁸ Comic books, however, served not only as a point of discomfort, as his interactions with his mother could suggest but, also a point of satisfaction. He notes taking refuge in comics during his bouts of illness and isolation.⁹ His emotional vulnerability runs deep; which was escalated by instances of childhood illness. Warhol records coming down with three bouts of what he calls “madness” between the ages of eight and ten. This “madness” was St. Vitus Dance.

CHILDHOOD ILLNESS

St. Vitus Dance (Sydenham Chorea) is a side effect of Rheumatic Fever. This disease is marked by palsy in the extremities and sometimes the face. The result is a major loss of bodily control, thus rendering the body unreliable. He describes the lack of control best when he notes his inability to hold chalk steady, so that he could write in class.¹⁰ This disease usually resolves, but in some cases, it can be recurrent, as it presented in Warhol.¹¹ An additional symptom Warhol experienced was hair loss.¹² St. Vitus' Dance presents similarly to disorders such as stroke. This is undoubtedly a traumatic illness, one that creates a sense of difference and disorder in the patient. What is remarkable about this illness is despite its tragic qualities, it has gained little attention within Warhol literature, which usually cites it as an example of his fragility. Perhaps it was more damaging to Warhol's psyche than previously suggested. This essay posits the lasting and damaging bond to his body this created

Warhol's relationship to his body continued to ebb and flow well into his adult years. This tenuous relationship was augmented by notable life events such as the death of his mother Julia and later the attack on his life by Valerie

Solanas.¹³ He was afraid of death and as such, attempted to live in a mechanical, empty fashion.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Warhol's childhood cannot be discussed without considering a dominant source of alienation in his life, his homosexuality. This aspect of his identity could certainly be linked to the issues regarding friends. His homosexuality was a source of difference. Many sources note that Warhol overplayed his homosexuality, to his benefit. Edward D. Powers suggests that he used his played-up identity to create a shield and control the flow of personal information. He did this on a basis of overstating the obvious in order to avert attention from more personal details.¹⁴ His sexuality was put on display for the public so it would not raise questions. Gavin Butt suggests that he added flamboyance to his gay identity so as to play to the media and set himself apart from "serious painters" such as Robert Rauschenberg or Jackson Pollock.¹⁵ In combination, this provides a vantage point by which Warhol and his identity were shaped by alienation and abjection. A prime example of this behavior occurred in an interview with Glen O'Brien where he notes that his first work of art was a paper doll.¹⁶ It is a particularly



Figure 1. Andy Warhol, *Dick Tracy*, 1961 Casein and Crayon on canvas.



Figure 2. Andy Warhol, *Nosepicker I: Why Pick on Me* (originally titled *The Lord Gave Me My Face but I Can Pick My Own Nose*), 1948 Tempera on board.

clear example of his close manipulation of masculinity to highlight the obvious and hide deeper traumas.

Reva Wolf asserts a more mature pronouncement of the foolish flamboyance he projected to the public. While Warhol was quietly involved in the New York poetry scene, he never showed this aspect to the public. Publicly he wrote, “Blue Butterfly Day” that established the same childish triteness consistent with his public image¹⁷. Warhol appropriated effeminate fluff into his body of work in order to craft his image. The appearance he chose to undertake was superficial and left little room for interpretation. This lack of interpretation allowed him to create a shield to protect his vulnerabilities.

PORTRAITURE AND IDENTITY

Warhol would carry this sense of difference perhaps brought on by illness and childhood strife through the rest of his career. He received his training at Carnegie Institute of Technology. It is here that he undertook a genre that would span his entire career: portraiture. One of his earliest self-portraits was created while he was still a student at Carnegie. “The Lord Gave Me My Face, but I Can Pick My Own Nose”¹⁸(1949) is one of his

earliest self-portraits (Fig. 2). While it is shrouded in tongue-in-cheek humor, this piece certainly underscores his lack of self-esteem and discomfort with his appearance. He creates a visual pun surrounding the idea of 'picking' to articulate his concerns.

Powers explains the various levels of 'picking' in the image. There is the first level in which the finger picks at the nose, but there is also the second level where he was picked-on and attacked for his appearance. It seems highly likely that peers would have harassed Warhol for his illness as well as his appearance. It is noted that Warhol was called 'Andy the Red Nosed Warhola' by classmates due to acne and rosacea outbreaks.¹⁹ If such benign maladies were cause for scorn, his abject illness likely elicited a negative response. Powers also offers a third level of meaning in the context of a later work "Before and After I" (Fig. 3) where Warhol literally picks out a new nose.²⁰ His desire for a new nose is also linked to his ambition to distance himself from his identity as the child of Eastern European immigrants. His nose was a visual signifier of his difference. These behaviors are also indicative of his change in last name from Warhola to Warhol during his teen years. Peter Gay suggests, that Warhol found it

more "euphonious,"²¹ but perhaps it was just more American sounding and less vilifying. This image is suggestive of both his career as a commercial illustrator and his Pop career.

This eventually evolved to what he is best known for, Pop Art. His creation of "Dick Tracy" (Fig.1) serves as a precedent to the development of his career from illustrating commodities to making an illustration a commodity. Bradford Collins notes that in Warhol's early career he tended toward drawing homoerotic hunks but as his career progressed, he moved toward more commonly accepted manly men. The square-jawed Dick Tracy is a prime example of this appeal to the masses.²² It was through purposeful appeal to the multitude, Warhol shaped his personality and an art movement.

The goal of Pop Art from his perspective is to negate connoisseurship and hand skill.²³ Pop Art is a genre born of industry. Peter Gay refers to the Pop phenomenon as "A shotgun marriage of high and low."²⁴ It has been suggested that he and other Pop artists fulfilled Duchamp's desire to break the paradigms of fine art.²⁵ The marriage resulted in a flat and oftentimes empty portrayal of the world, at least superficially. His chosen format embodies the flat personality that has come to be associated with

Warhol. The break with reality which childhood illness, among other stresses, can cause is echoed by his medium of choice. Bradford Collins suggests that Pop Art serves as a coping mechanism for “a nexus of psychological problems.”²⁶ Pop Art serves as a platform to clarify and facilitate expression (or lack thereof) his personal concerns.

WARHOL IN THE MODERN MILIEU

This may be the result of the nature of popular culture. “Pop culture” is a one dimensional, simplified, and commodity based perspective of the world. The idea of establishing a standard, consumerist culture is best summed up by a pithy remark by Warhol. When asked early in his career, “What does Coca-Cola mean to you?” He responded, “Pop”.²⁷ It is a typical answer by Warhol. His response is flat and self-defining; pop is an alternate term for soda. While it is a correct answer, it is one born in flippancy and foolishness. It is a response that can also be viewed less literally. The popular emphasizes two factors: normalization and commodity, which is realized by every can of Coca-Cola. Warhol, however, did not have the luxury of being part of the “popular.” Various facets of his identity, including his incidences of illness during childhood, left him on the margins.

An overarching threat to Warhol and the Pop project was the impact of Communism. The high-minded aims of Communism would eradicate any interest in brand name soup cans or kitchen-cleaning pads brought to fame by Warhol’s *Campbell’s Soup* and *Brillo Boxes*. He approached this issue in typical Warhol form, with tongue-in-cheek and an eye for exaggeration. Rather than succumbing to the fears and anxieties state socialism created, Warhol played to propaganda. He parodied the propaganda posters prevalent during the Chinese Cultural Revolution but rather than highlighting the political machine of Mao Tse-Tsung, he rendered Mao as what Justin Spring refers to as “a figure of fun.”²⁸ His *Mao* (Fig. 4) wears lipstick and eye shadow--rendered in such a way as to make him nonthreatening. This is a typical mode of creation for Warhol and befitting of the manner by which he controlled his identity. He created portraits of the famous and himself that obfuscated the truth.

Portraiture is a mainstay within Warhol’s body of work. It is on the faces of Warhol’s subjects where he expresses the greatest distress. Indeed, the lack of expressiveness and repetition in his portraits creates the flat, empty images, which viewers have come to associate with him. Not

only did he embody the difference of being an immigrant, a homosexual and a Catholic but there was also the difference created by his illness. His use of portraiture could be interpreted as an effort to exert what little control he had and entrust the public with his manipulated narrative.

The narrative Warhol chose to adopt was deeply beauty focused. Despite this, Warhol had a difficult relationship with the concept of beauty. He makes the claim that the word 'beauty' essentially has no meaning.²⁹ His feelings surrounding issues of beauty are of considerable importance. One typically does not make such inflated statements unless diametrically opposed to a certain opinion. Warhol and his career are full of contradictions. The man, who built a career based on the beauty of starlets, had a very negative relationship with his own elegance and charm.

HANDLING OF THE WARHOL IDENTITY

One of Andy's most telling works is a series of self-portraits he took between 1963 and 1964 (Fig. 5). In the series he has several highly posed, Hollywood-esque images. Some of the images, however, are quite odd. There is an extra set of hands, which moves and warps Warhol's poses. The hands serve as an external representation of



Figure 3. Andy Warhol, *Before and After I*, 1961, Casein and pencil on canvas.

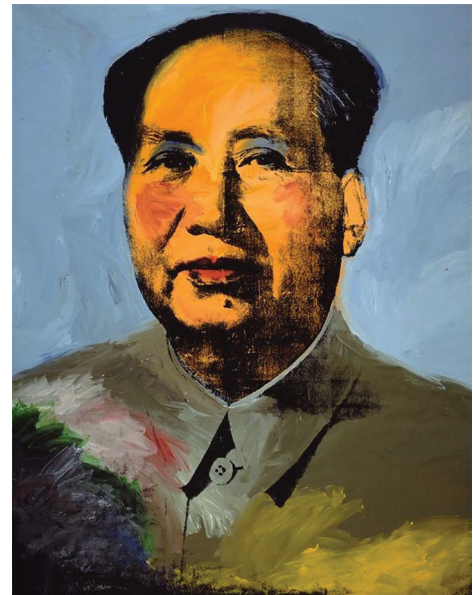


Figure 4. Andy Warhol, *Mao*, 1972, Acrylic and screen painting on linen.



Figure 5. Andy Warhol, *Self-Portrait*, 1963-1964, photobooth photograph.



Figure 6. Andy Warhol, *Self-Portrait with Skull*, 1978, Acrylic on linen.

his feelings regarding his appearance and a desire to edit his identity. A disconnect between man and body is underscored.

Warhol is said to control his identity, not unlike the handler seen in the image. He was known for cultivating his flaws as a way of deflecting questions. Perhaps that his most refined genre was storytelling. He treated the stigmas in his life in two very distinct manners. With regard to character, identity and/or bodily blemishes such as his homosexuality or distinctive nose, he put them out in the open so as to avoid questioning the obvious. An exception to this is found in his treatment of his “madness,” which he only mentions in passing. Illness did not live up to his carefully filtered standard. Rejection from his classmates and an abjection creating illness were likely painful, not worth bringing to direct light. Abjection, while it draws in the viewer, it ultimately disgusts them. Powers is careful to note that he treats his Catholic and Slavic background differently, despite also being seen as stigma by outsiders.³⁰ In the context of his upbringing, attending mass and speaking Rusyn were viewed as normal and therefore are addressed with less vigor than his other “shortcomings”.³¹ The restriction of his identity was only heightened by his public

persona.

Warhol embodies the same performative quality in his portraits. His narratives are never far from the surface of his images.³² This practice is done by design. It is a manner of making Warhol a commodity, whether he is a Hollywood puppet, as his “Self-Portrait” (1963-1964) seems to suggest or a “Vanitas” as his skull series from the 1970s conjectures (Fig. 6).³³ In essence, Warhol is willing to be anything but himself in the self-portraits he creates. He is not the focus of the portrait so much as he controls the subject of the images.

Rosenblum offers that Warhol reached a level of “secular sainthood,” in other words, he achieved a level of notoriety where he is part of the pantheon of modern “saints” who can be referred to by first name alone. Rosenblum’s essay notes that Warhol and his work are indeed indicative of art history in the post-modern milieu.³⁴ To be famous within the context of the post-modern age asks nothing more than an understanding of commodities and willingness to co-opt one’s identity to the mainstream. This rings particularly true within the discourse of the queer community.

His reception within the queer community was tenuous. Figures such as Cherry Vanilla and Jayne (née Wayne) County were quite popular in

film and stage productions at Warhol’s factory. Perhaps this could be ascribed to their transsexual identities and therefore, they were too abject for mainstream co-option. So, too, were Robert Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith fixtures at the factory; gay man and female icon amongst gay men respectively.³⁵ Within the context of the high art community, Warhol’s self-imposed, exaggerated homosexual identity, or “swishness,” attracted attention--posed a risk. His pervasive effeminacy threatened to “out” his fellow gay artists by association, notably Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.³⁶ He was left with two options to keep him homosexuality secret and potentially expose himself to unwanted curiosity or stick to what he knew best, kitsch, “swish” and beauties.

One of the most significant commodities of the 20th century targeted by Warhol are screen actresses and other particularly notable women. Peter Glidal notes that Warhol’s subjects are mostly individuals involved with a taboo such as Lesbians, hustlers and pushers.³⁷ No doubt their shared identity on the margins of society created a sense of comfort for Warhol. Thomas Crow cites that in the context of the queer community, women are often the stars of the show.³⁸ Perhaps the most notable star of all is Marilyn Monroe. Warhol,

in one of his most iconic images, *Golden Marilyn Monroe*, gives Monroe her own relic of so-called “secular sainthood” (Fig. 7).

Ruth Adams is quick to mention the politics of blonde hair in her article “Idol Curiosity.” Warhol broke the ideal image of Marian icons. Traditionally the gold and flaxen qualities of the Madonna are used to express divinity and purity. In Warhol’s renditions such as “Golden Marilyn Monroe” and “Barbie, Portrait of Billy Boy*” (Fig. 8) however, the blondeness becomes more of a comment on the contemporary sexual signifier and less of a harkening to the purity normally associated with the Virgin Mary. Billy Boy*, much like Marilyn and Warhol, was a created entity.³⁹ Adams goes on to note that for both individuals, “going blonde” was indicative of a major life event. It marked a departure from their true identities to assumed personas.⁴⁰ It was also likely an attempt to co-opt the mainstream and therefore become a commodity, the sexy “dumb blonde.” The persons they projected to the public were hardly true to the identities of either individual.

Warhol and Monroe were equally doomed individuals. It is no coincidence that Warhol chose Marilyn to “be his face” (i.e. the paradigmatic

face of his work) as Adams proposes.⁴¹ Some scholars posit Warhol as one of the greatest market researchers of all time. After all, very few individuals understand the impact of canned soup or kitchen cleaning pads on the American public. Warhol had a tight grasp on the concept of ‘brand equity.’ He built a commodity out of himself and all his creations.⁴² By extension, he created a lack of humanity in the individuals he co-opted into to his work.

His rendering of Barbie serves as a midpoint between the mass-market items and his ultimate fame. She bridges the gap between Warhol’s two major subject matters. Not unlike Marilyn, she embodies the virgin–whore paradox. While she is plastic and a child’s toy, she also reflects pure sex appeal.⁴³ This is not so different from Warhol who presented a fragile man and a sexually open individual concurrently. To some degree, Barbie is a reflection of the culture at large. She is indicative of the push and pull between human reality and plastic perfection, the prevailing theme of Warhol’s work. Both blondes project a lie. Yet, it is that very myth which has shaped post-modern American culture.

PSYCHOANALYTIC DEVICES

Warhol's work flattened the personae of the individuals rendered. Seemingly vibrant celebrities were collapsed into one-dimensional describers. For example, Marilyn Monroe was reduced to a sex-icon and Mao Tse-Tung to nothing more than a farcical emblem of control. It seems no mistake that the faces Warhol focused on were somewhat reflective of his own issues. His work reads as flat and lifeless because he, in effect, kills the subject. This is a paradigm of his oeuvre and is indicative of a kind of break with reality his childhood illness caused him. This, however, is also not entirely under his control. These behaviors are best categorized by the Lacanian term, *repetition*. Lacan and his psychoanalytic forebears note that individuals seem to make the same poor decisions repeatedly and for what appears to be no good reason. Lacan pares this issue down to *jouissance*, which can be defined as pleasure in excess. It is a misappropriation of the pleasure principle, rather than heeding the boundary between pleasure and pain. When the individual continues to seek pleasure to a point where pleasure becomes a perverse pain. It is part of a struggle between the self and the other. The individual struggles to find wholeness.⁴⁴ It can be linked with Warhol's

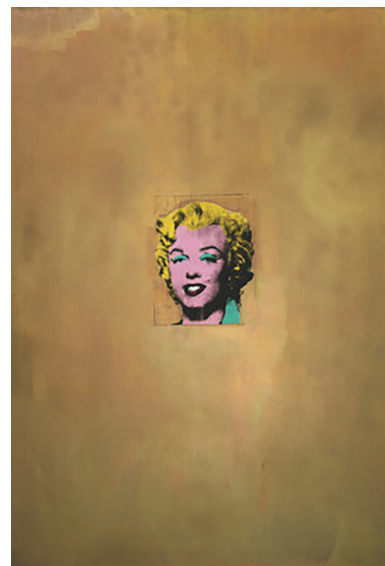


Figure 7. Andy Warhol, *Gold Marilyn Monroe*, 1962, silkscreen ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas.



Figure 8. Andy Warhol, *Barbie, Portrait of Billy-boy**, 1986, Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas.



Figure 9. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Andy Warhol*, 1986 printed 1990, Photograph gelatin silver print on paper.



Figure 10. Andy Warhol, *Camouflage Self-Portrait*, 1986, Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen on canvas.

oblique statements regarding homosexuality and his nose, or even his repetition of portraiture. These ideas are repeated to a point of damage in order to enumerate an entity that is missing. In the case of Warhol, this appears to be a pronounced sense of self. Warhol's return to a subject matter that causes pain and lies so closely to the traumas of his past appears to be almost masochistic.

Contemporary theorist, Slavoj Žižek, echoes these thoughts. He suggests that every human action is a repetition such that mankind has two basic decisions: sin or salvation. As soon as sin is chosen, there is no escape, the pattern holds across all behaviors.⁴⁵ Žižek applies this idea across several power structures. The most applicable of these structures to Warhol and his situation would be the relationship to authority. In this case, the authority Warhol would be countering is the American mainstream. The American view of beauty is arbitrary based mostly in the perspectives of just a few media tycoons. Warhol and his conception of the self are counter to this idea. Due to this he makes doubled efforts to expose his shortcomings.

While dicta such as “there is no cure for genius” are often ascribed to long-suffering artists, Warhol's life experiences suggest deeper damage.⁴⁶

There is a relationship between affliction and the corresponding works of art. Sandblom suggests that the ill seek a method of communicating their struggles to the wider community.⁴⁷ To the contrary, what Sandblom fails to recognize is that there is an aspect of illness that separates the ill from the community, thus making sick individuals different and not part of the same reality. Disease is often accompanied by abjection. This is why their art often reads as strange, even haunted. The distress of sickness is more extensive than Sandblom is willing to admit.

CHILDHOOD ILLNESS: TWO STUDIES

Two studies of children in hospitals serve as proof of the damage illness can create. An Italian study focuses on leukemia patients during painful procedures. One of the most striking symptoms in patients was phantasmagorical visions. With treatment through play and art therapy, the children could become well adjusted. The authors note that illness can make children feel different because it removes them from play and other interactions with their peers.⁴⁸ This appears to be consistent with the idea that sickness creates an impaired perception of reality. A second American study supports these notions; an

abandoned, physically and mentally ill African-American girl is the focus. She reports similar ghost-like visions and has comparable outcomes with art therapy.⁴⁹ Art can underscore both the hurt and heal the patient when used in the proper setting. The ghosts reported by patients are extraordinary and suggest the impact of their suffering. Furthermore, if left untreated, the mental tragedies of pediatric patients could deeply impact adulthood.

Left unattended, the ghosts of illness can haunt individuals for their entire life. Disease creates a sense of panic and disgust in adults but with children, the trauma moves a layer deeper. Children are removed from the simplicity of childhood and thrown into an adult world that comprises experiences and vocabularies that are not likely understood by the patient and misconceived by their peers.⁵⁰

The potential break with reality that both psychological studies suggest is characterized by Warhol's overstatement of his shortcomings. It is unimportant if Warhol was a sufferer of what Collins called "a nexus of psychological problems"⁵¹ or the complicated put-on Crow, Wolf, et.al suggest. There is a strong sense that Warhol possessed a crazy-like-a-fox mentality,

knowing well that his difference could be an asset. What seems to be a relatively ignored entity is the real impact of Warhol's bout of childhood illness. It is possible that he implemented his coping mechanism in such an advanced form of hide-and-seek that very few were ever able to understand the cause of pain and embarrassment illness created during his childhood. It was hidden behind the flatness of his artworks and his personality. The only time there ever seemed to be a break in Warhol's pervasive avoidance strategies is in a photograph taken in 1986 by Robert Mapplethorpe (Fig. 9). In this image, Warhol appears softer and more open. He makes eye contact with the camera rather than reflecting it through sunglasses, as typical. Perhaps Warhol had mellowed with age. This, however, seems unlikely, as Warhol's late style is not reflective of the same openness. In 1986, the same year he sat for the Mapplethorpe portrait, he created his camouflage series. "Camouflage Self-Portrait" (Fig.10) shows no signs of responsiveness. The Philadelphia Museum notes a feeling of danger in their description of the image.⁵² This notion seems true. Warhol hides beneath a glaze of camouflage. Or perhaps his coping mechanisms were null and void in the presence of friend and fellow gay man,

Mapplethorpe. Was it possible that Mapplethorpe's HIV positive status made Warhol even more comfortable? Both suffered from illnesses that disgraced their identities. Their illnesses created abjection, Julia Kristeva outlines this notion concretely as, "Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful..."⁵³ Illnesses, particularly those not well understood, construct feelings of shame and rejection. The public knew neither what to make of HIV, very little was known at the time of the outbreak nor of St. Vitus' Dance, which renders the body spastic and unreliable. Mapplethorpe was all too aware of this. His work often directly addresses his gay identity. While it was never intended, both men were co-opted into the mainstream as gay martyrs.⁵⁴ Their shared identities certainly added to the intimacy seen in the image. It should be noted that the photography was not printed until 1990 after both artists had passed away, perhaps it is because of the personal nature this image had for both individuals.⁵⁵ Mapplethorpe was certainly a more abject subject than Warhol in light of his HIV diagnosis and public opinion surrounding the HIV/AIDS virus at its outbreak. His relationship with Warhol, however, as revealed by the photograph, sheds

light on the man who existed beneath the coping mechanisms.

WARHOL THE GENTLE AND SOBER

Wolf postulates that Warhol was indeed more intelligent, amicable and sober than the general public was lead to believe. She cites his close connection with the poetry community (which included Mapplethorpe) and a large collection of books catalogued upon his passing as her main evidence.⁵⁶ These thoughts are echoed by Krauss when she discusses the role of the author in the post-modern milieu.⁵⁷ In light of a newly established lack of authorial gravity, Warhol no longer needed to offer himself as part and parcel of his art. His work serves as testimony to the remarkable manner by which the world changed in the 1960s, and the new attitudes served as a layer of protection against the scrutiny of the outside world. Warhol and his works no longer needed to serve the same ends thus, freeing the artist to hide behind an alternate identity.

Warhol's friend, former studio assistant and poet, Gerard Malanga echoes this, noting the role of the creator being hidden in his poem for Warhol, "Now in Another Way":

"The artist is stretching and stapling as the
determined look /
of somewhere ahead /
Becomes two faces destroying themselves, that
turn black /
with repetition".⁵⁸

The reference to two faces turning black with repetition is not only suggestive of Warhol's silkscreens but also his two-faced personality, which managed to obscure his direst shortcomings. This was also his major detriment. His close jurisdiction over his identity destroyed him. In order to protect his most sensitive, vulnerable aspects he allowed no room for emotional fragility. Thus, the public remembers him as a foolish man, pickled by plastic surgery and camera flash. On the contrary, he is representative of a more dimensional individual than his public persona leads many to believe. His personality is indeed multi-faceted, inclusive of his childhood illness. His entire identity, even aspects that remain hidden, impacted his influence over Pop Culture.

CONCLUSION

Warhol and his influence permeate western culture from grocery aisles to radio waves. It is essential to understand what factors shaped such a pervasive discourse. While often minimized by

other biographic details such as his personality and sexuality, Warhol's incidences of childhood illness profoundly affected him and so too his work. This piece of alienating history must be established in order to understand his corpus thoroughly, particularly his treatment of portraiture. It also may account for the very nature of the Pop style, so distinctively defined by Warhol.

The flat canvas of his many famous silk-screens serve as the platform for the expression of Warhol's internal friction. He cared not so much if they were signed by him or done by his own hand; so much as they were created with machine-like implication (perfection was a rare reality). The gloss distracts from the destruction. Crow suggests that the world created by Warhol was an allegory. The context he lived in was precarious, described by Crow "...[that] his approach or quest takes place in a world of conflict and constant mortal danger."⁵⁹ Perhaps this is the same danger reflected in his "Camouflage Self-Portrait. On a personal level, he lived a difficult life spanning from a poor upbringing, social rejection, lack of acceptance by his homosexual peers and childhood illness. Not to mention a tenuous relationship with his body that would continue into his later life and was punctuated by the attempt on his life by

Valerie Solonas. On the macro level, he saw even greater strife such as: a world war, the Kennedy assassination, the cold war, and the AIDs outbreak. The plastic coolness of the Pop movement spearheaded by Warhol provided recourse to a world rife with struggle and the shadows of a traumatized youth. It offers a place of safety from the emotional ordeals of the sick child. Portraiture is a fairytale that casts its plastic mist across the work of Warhol, protecting him from the monsters of his past.

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- ³ Richard D. Custer, "What is a Rusyn, What Is a Rusyn?" Carpatho-Rusyn Society.
- ⁴ Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 21.
- ⁵ Glen O'Brien "Andy Warhol." *Interview* 38.5 (2008), 103.
- ⁶ Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again*, 22.
"I wasn't very close to anyone, although I guess I wanted to be, because when I would see the kids telling one another their problems, I felt left out."
- ⁷ Bradford Collins, "The Metaphysical Nose Job: The Remaking of Warhola 1960-1968," *Arts Magazine February* (1988), 52.
- ⁸ *ibid*, 48.
"I'd been hurt a lot to the degree you can only be hurt when you care a lot. So I guess I did care a lot..."
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- ¹⁰ *ibid*.
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- ¹³ *Andy Warhol*. Dir. Kim Evans. Perf. Melvyn Bragg. Home Vision, 1987. Videocassette.
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- ¹⁵ Gavin Butt, *Between you and Me: Queer Discourses in the New York Art World, 1948-1963*, (Durham: Duke University, 2005), 106.
- ¹⁶ Glen O'Brien "Andy Warhol." *Interview* 38.5 (2008), 103.
- ¹⁷ Reva Wolf, *Andy Warhol, Poetry and Gossip in the 1960s*, 11.
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- ²⁰ Powers, *ibid*.
- ²¹ Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy from Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond*, (New York, W.W. Norton, 2008), 474.
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- ⁴² Jonathan Schroeder, "Andy Warhol: Consumer Researcher," *Association for Consumer Research*, (Kingston: University of Rhode Island, 1997), N.p.
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STUDIO ART

MACKY BLISS

Bar Rat

My main influences are usually the people who surround me, and the experiences that I face because of those people. Working as a bartender has directly impacted my art. Faces, expressions, emotions and behaviors intrigue me. Bartending allows me to be a participant in and observer of many unique human interactions and social codes that I use as material for my work. I often photograph the people I interact with, especially while bartending, to use as source material.

For a while I was focusing on extreme emotions such as grief, but I have become more interested in the nuances of people's underlying feelings and behaviors. An example of this is a moment of introspection that flashes across a man's face, or a hand gesture that a woman makes when telling a funny story. These instantaneous seconds of unguarded display are difficult to capture on camera and they are so ubiquitous that we rarely recognize them while they are happening. For me, work is most satisfying and deliberate when I am driven by specific psychological content, and the images I collect at the bar have been propelling me in this direction.

I have been working mainly with oil paints for the last few years, but more recently I have been experimenting with other media including ink, gesso, pastels, acrylics, and collaged paper. Working with the materials I have on hand to create a compelling composition is a challenge I relish. I feel as though I am solving a problem when I use the tools I have nearby to make an interesting piece. There is an unfinished quality that flows through all of my pieces, regardless of how carefully considered they are. I am attracted to the rawness that is created by this unadorned formal practice. In my work, I cultivate a compositional playfulness and spirited mark-making.

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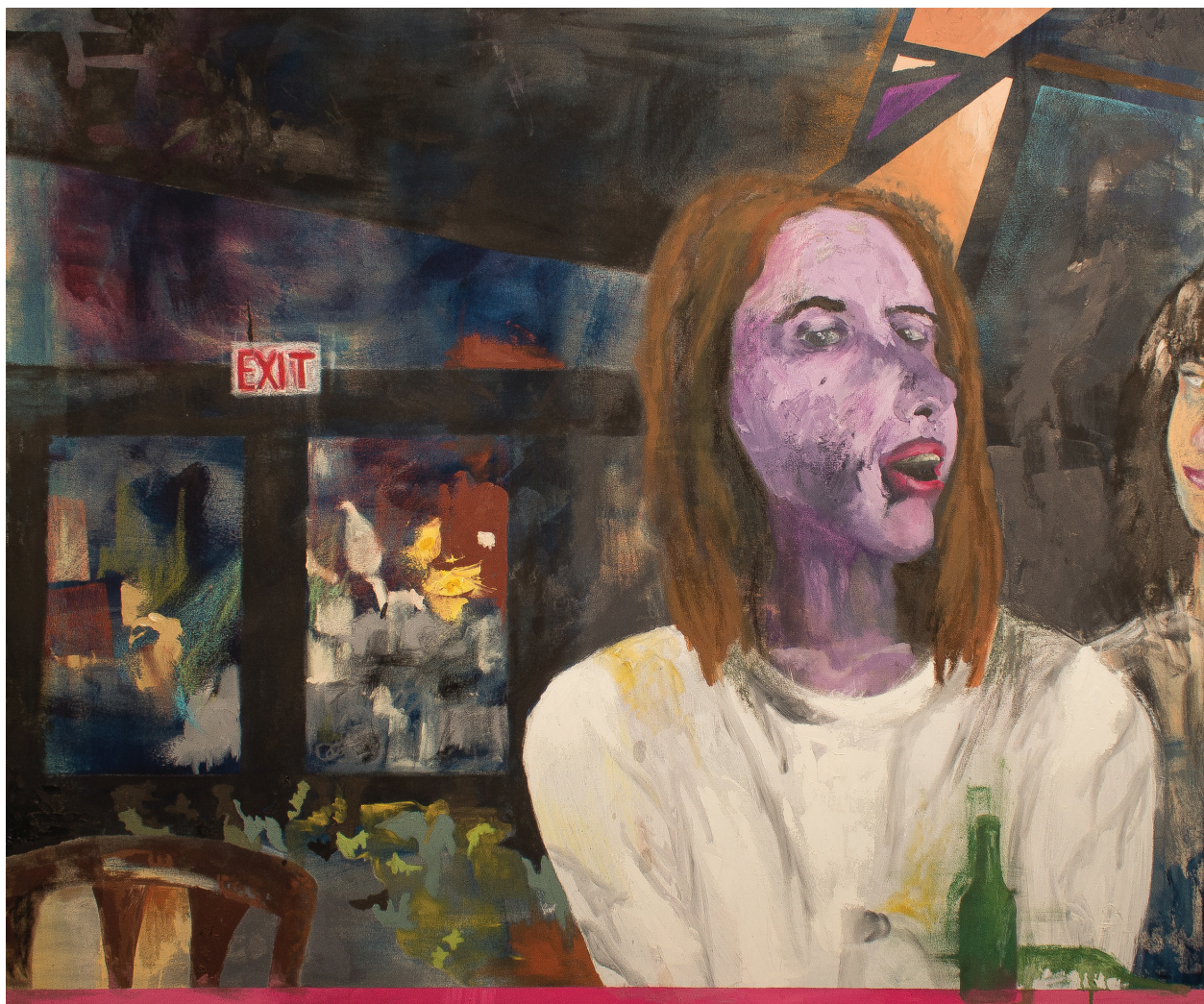
In small, quickly-executed portraits, I try to capture the most important aspects of the person's expression and features using strong ink marks and free flowing gesso. Causing strange reactions between materials is something I incorporate in my oil paintings. Combining pours or drips with more controlled marks, as well as loose pastel drawing, creates a variety of textures that pull the viewer's attention to the piece's focal points. Specifically, in my bar paintings, using varied formal techniques are a way to signify individuality among people, and emphasize different emotional tones.

I hope to bring a new perspective and emotional impact to the age-old topic of bar life and public scenes, while speaking to the art of the past. I'm particularly interested in Edouard Manet's images of leisure in 19th century Paris; Adriaen Brouwer's ludicrous and expressive paintings of debauchery in the 17th-century Netherlands; and German portraits from the 1920s by Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, and George Grosz. I work at examining my own moment through pictures of social behavior in the tradition of the painters I admire, and I try to allow a viewer to experience a specific moment in a person's life. That moment could be one of intense emotional pain, confusion, or even some kind of action. Whatever instant of time I hold up in a piece, I want the viewer to connect it to his or her own life.

Bloody Nose is the Icing on the Cake, oil and pastel on canvas, 30" x 40", 2015



What's Wrong? Nothing., oil and pastel on canvas, 60" x 50", 2015



Untitled, oil and pastel on canvas, 44" x 56", 2015



Untitled, ink on canvas, 8" x 10", 2015



ASHLEY COUTU

Camera Roll

As an artist I work freely amongst all mediums, though my main medium is photography. This body of work is a photographic self-portrait over time focusing on the last four years of my life. I have documented my everyday activities by saving every image I have ever taken on my phone and camera.

Within the body of photographs I am including screen-captures of conversations I have saved that once shared a very personal meaning to me. Arranged in chronological order, my documentation provides a visual picture of my memories and emotions with friends, significant others, family, and my own personal time. The sensitive subjects of my past have formed me into the person I am today. I am revealing a side of my past that I often have positive and negative associates with.

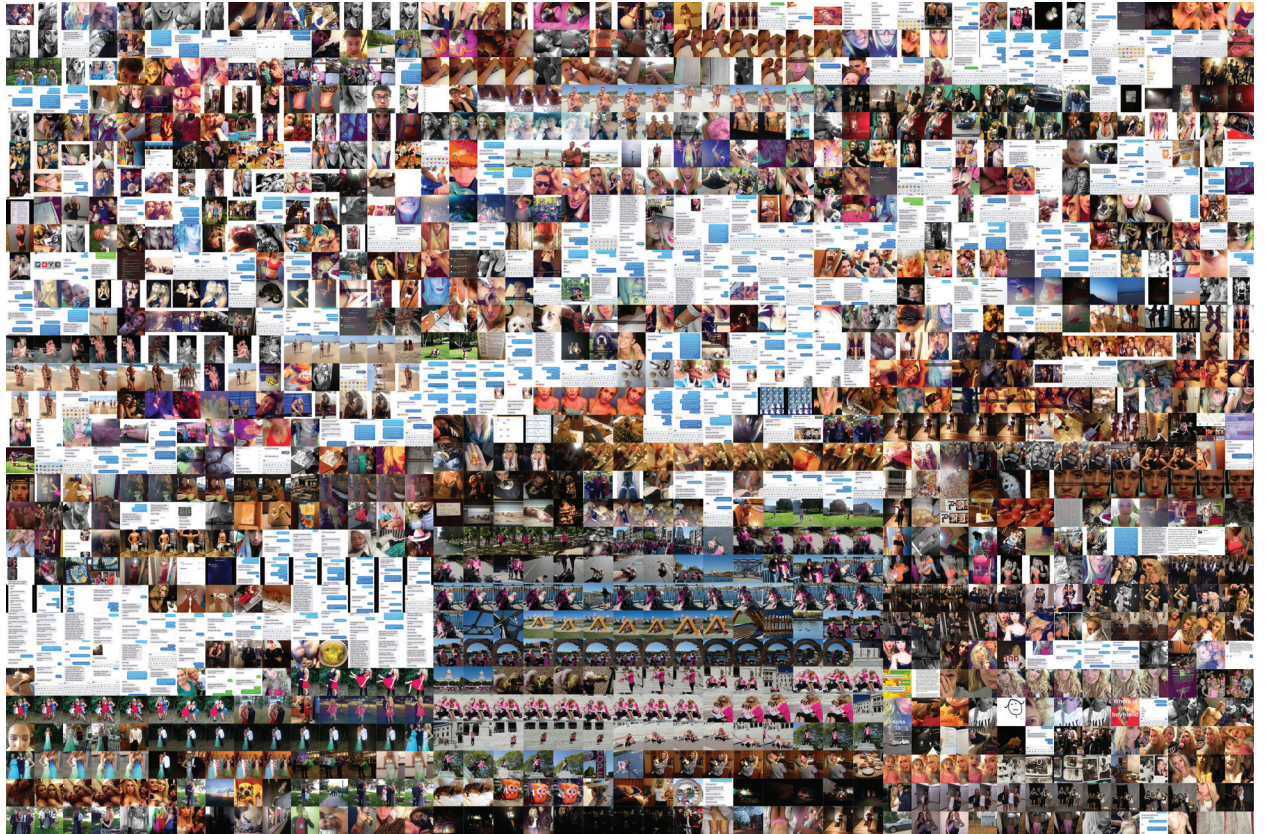
As implied by the exhibition's title, Camera Roll, this exhibit is a gallery filled with my camera roll from 2011 to 2015. My work encourages viewers to get lost in my small-scale prints as if they were the thumbnails on their phone screens. This overwhelming display and grid format reveals a personal connection I have to my chaotic fast-paced life style. My scattered and anxiety-filled impulse to save everything is explored here as one whole artwork.

This artwork is a piece of me.

Camera Roll, digital collage, 40" x 105', 2011-2014



Camera Roll, digital collage, 40" x 105', 2011-2014



GIANNA D'AMICO

Freak Show

This exhibit is a self-project inspired by my drug addiction, my demise and my checking into rehab last August. I have become fascinated with institutions and the institutionalized. The characters in my drawings, such as the moon with John Lennon glasses, the pig holding a newspaper, or the alien man and his cigarette, represent institutionalized people from various societies with various conditions. I have met lots of these people in my 20 years. Medically speaking, I am one myself.

I have made a strong connection between institutions and abnormalities, and this observation has led me to. So, I have been researching an interest in American freak shows of the early 1900s, in which people were put on display because of their physical abnormalities. Many of these American 'freaks' of the 30s are represented in my art, including the bearded lady, the man in the dress, and the tiny man.

The sketches in my sketchbook often inspire me. I often build on drawings from my sketchbook, some of which are familiar characters that I have invented in my head- some and developed over years, and some are from sources. Some of my pieces may seem like they came out of a children's book, containing clowns, dolls, exaggerated smiles, and wide eyes. But the characters from this children's book have been taken out of their context and faced with the realities of hardship, isolation, desperation, and finally institutionalization.

I have recently recreated started to expand a series based on a character I had sketched while watching the 1932 drama, "Freaks." He is the announcer at the beginning of the film and introduces the freak show, using critical statements like, They did not ask to be brought into this world...

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I used black ink and pastels in the gray scale to mimic the black and white film. However, with more cartoon-ish animation and stylized rendering, I have created made him into my own character. I have also written a poem about my own insanity and how it led me to be institutionalized. I animated my ink drawings of this announcer character as if he was to recite my poem. The beginning of the poem reads:

The girl was disturbed it seems
For she preferred poppy nightmares over rose dreams

The idea to animate my image comes from two sources: First, a more recent sense that my studio contains many images of lively personalities, and they seem to want to tell a story. And second, since I was a child, my drawings always have had a detailed story behind them. At seven years old I could explain what has happening in the scene, who the characters were, where they were going and where they had been. This show portrays my process and thoughts as well as the animation itself. Animation has always been an interest to me and this project shows research rather than a flowing animation.

I have taken images of each movement on my iPhone 4. I have brought them into an app called Flipgram©. This app works as a flipbook, showing my images quickly in order. I am familiar with this program and it is how I imagined my project working. This animation will be projected on the wall, and although it is a silent animation, the words of my poem are hung in the exhibition as well because the story is important to me.

The animation is broken and awkward –not fluid at all –and that is how I intended it to be, emphasizing struggle and imperfection.

Untitled, ink and pastel, 22” x 36”, 2015



Untitled, ink and pastel, 22" x 36", 2015



Untitled, ink and pastel, 22" x 36", 2015



JANELLE DUNHAM

Speaking My Language: Color and Geometry

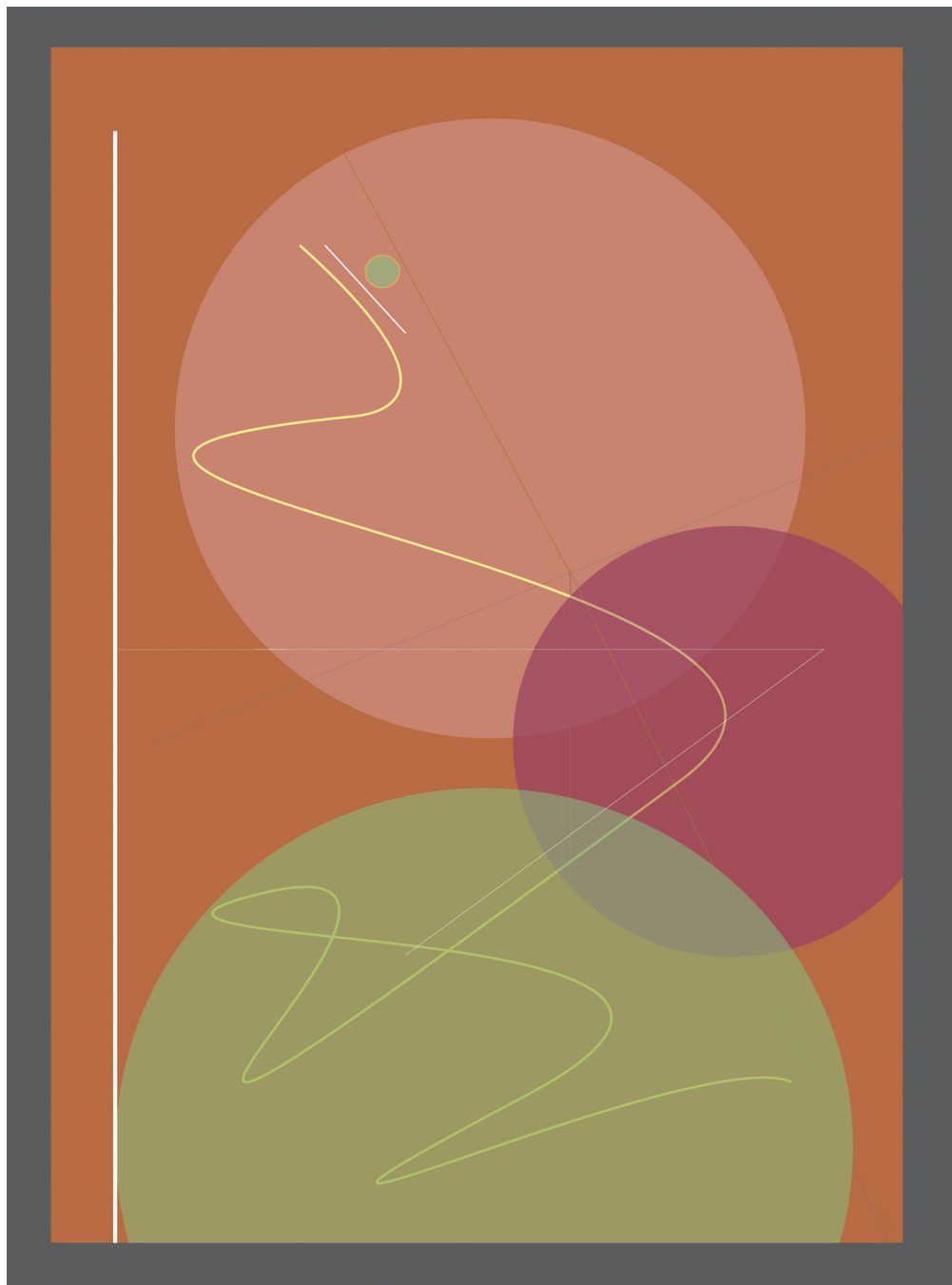
The first step in developing a geometric language that combines physical and digital processes: sketching with a mechanical pencil. With every sketch I consider the erasure markings, the horizontal or vertical composition, the intensity of each shape or line, the simplicity or complexity of each design, and the symmetry each design may or may not have. My designs reflect the influence of abstract artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Kazimir Malevich in addition to Bauhaus artists such as Josef Albers and Paul Klee.

The second step is to bring these sketches into Adobe Illustrator software, because it allows for the precision I am looking for in my work. Moreover, in Illustrator I can adjust each line or shape to establish a hierarchy of conversation. I can also control the path of a certain mark, twisting and turning, to produce either an exact geometry or a distorted form.

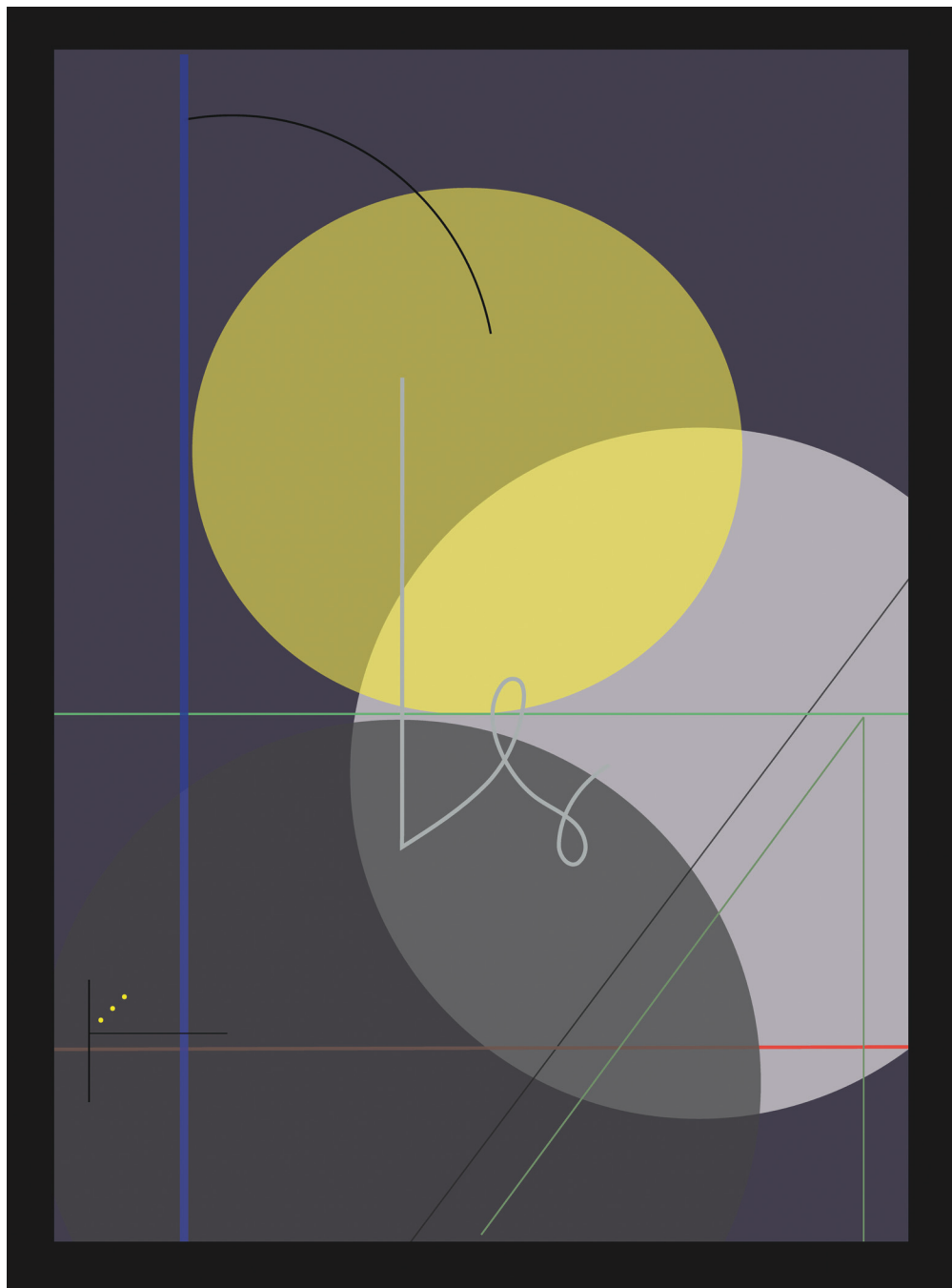
When this stage is finished, I incorporate color. In each piece, the geometrical figure is illuminated with a bright color on a dark contrasting background. This brings forth the geometry, but also gives the composition a sense of depth in space.

My designs are playful and possess an animated mood that flows within the rectangular space. With each design there is a balance between expansion and contraction and the combination of these two forces produces a geometrical pattern that is distinctive and transformative. In my work I manipulate and organize shapes that together bring about a fluidity of motion. This is the realm within which I make my greatest artistic impression.

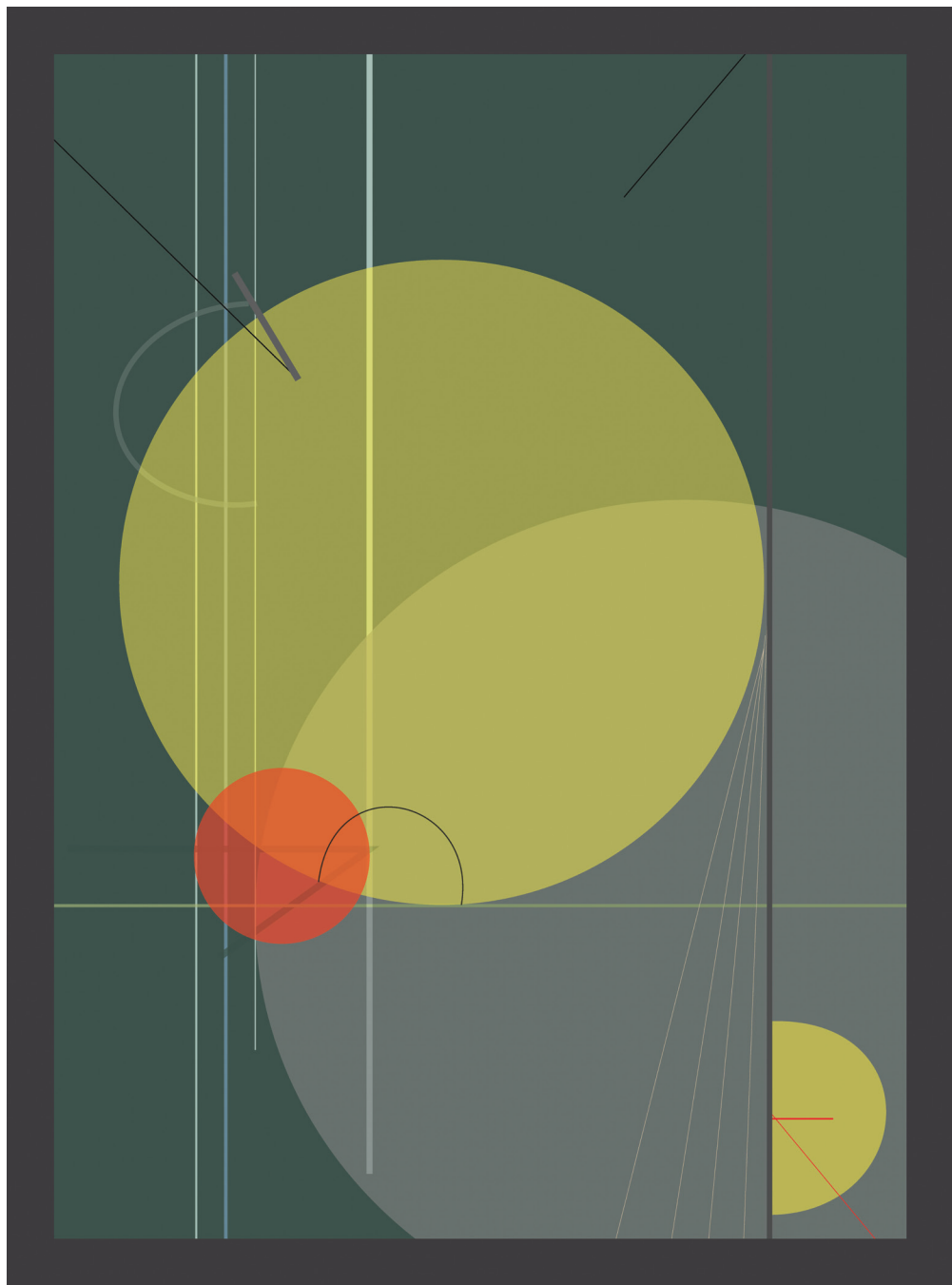
Trio, digital image, 40" x 54", 2015



Intersection, digital image, 40" x 54", 2015



Falling off the Plane, digital image, 40" x 54", 2015



RACHELE ROMANO

Endogenous

In my work I explore the exterior parts and interior sensations of the body, using both recognizable and imaginative abstract elements. Through this work I address issues affecting the body, specifically physical, sexual and verbal abuse. I'm interested in moments of trauma and their effects on the body. In my paintings I raise the questions: what goes on in the body? What could go on inside the body? What happens in the mind of person during a time of fear, and how does the body react to that? What would this look like on a canvas? My work explores the ways in which violence and stress affect people and bodies.

In my paintings, I destroy and recreate my own work. I build the thickness of oil paint with wax medium, layering it on canvas then scraping it off. I also use a liquid medium allowing the paint to glide onto the canvas. By pouring it, I only have a certain amount of control over where and how it moves. This tension between my body and the canvas relates to my interest in understanding the body and its inner sensations. Specifically, trying to understand how a type of abuse can affect the body, and how I would imagine that would look with paint. I essentially try to explore this by bringing what's within, derived internally, out onto the canvas.

Influences for my work come from various sources, for instance, photographs, books, film stills, and personal experiences. When I reference something in my work, I take a part of it, for instance a section of a photograph or film still. By taking only a section from this source and putting it in my work, I'm intentionally hiding something from the viewer. My overall intention is to disorient the viewer leading them to question what is true or false and recognizable or unrecognizable. I explore the unexplainable and unseen, and lead the viewer to question what is true and what is false in the painting. My paintings are filtered through my impulses, memories and imagination. The obscure aspect of my work creates an uneasiness. I play with revealing and hiding what I want the viewer to see.

Net, oil on canvas, 36" x 48", 2014



V and P, oil on canvas, 36" x 48", 2014



Untitled, oil on canvas, 36" x 48", 2015



LILIANDRA VIVOLO

Drift

Living on an island, I am fortunate to be immersed in nature and surrounded by many different bodies of water. The ocean, rivers, and bays of Long Island are a huge part of its beauty. This environment influences the content of my work and inspires the process I use to create it.

After years of visiting and photographing my favorite beaches on Long Island, I have collected numerous images of this unique environment during many different times of the day and seasons of the year. Before creating the digital drawings in Photoshop, I look through all of my photographs and choose ones that I think will be the most interesting to work on. I look for features like an abundance of rocks, trees, and sea grass, waves and ripples in the water, colorful skies and various types of clouds.

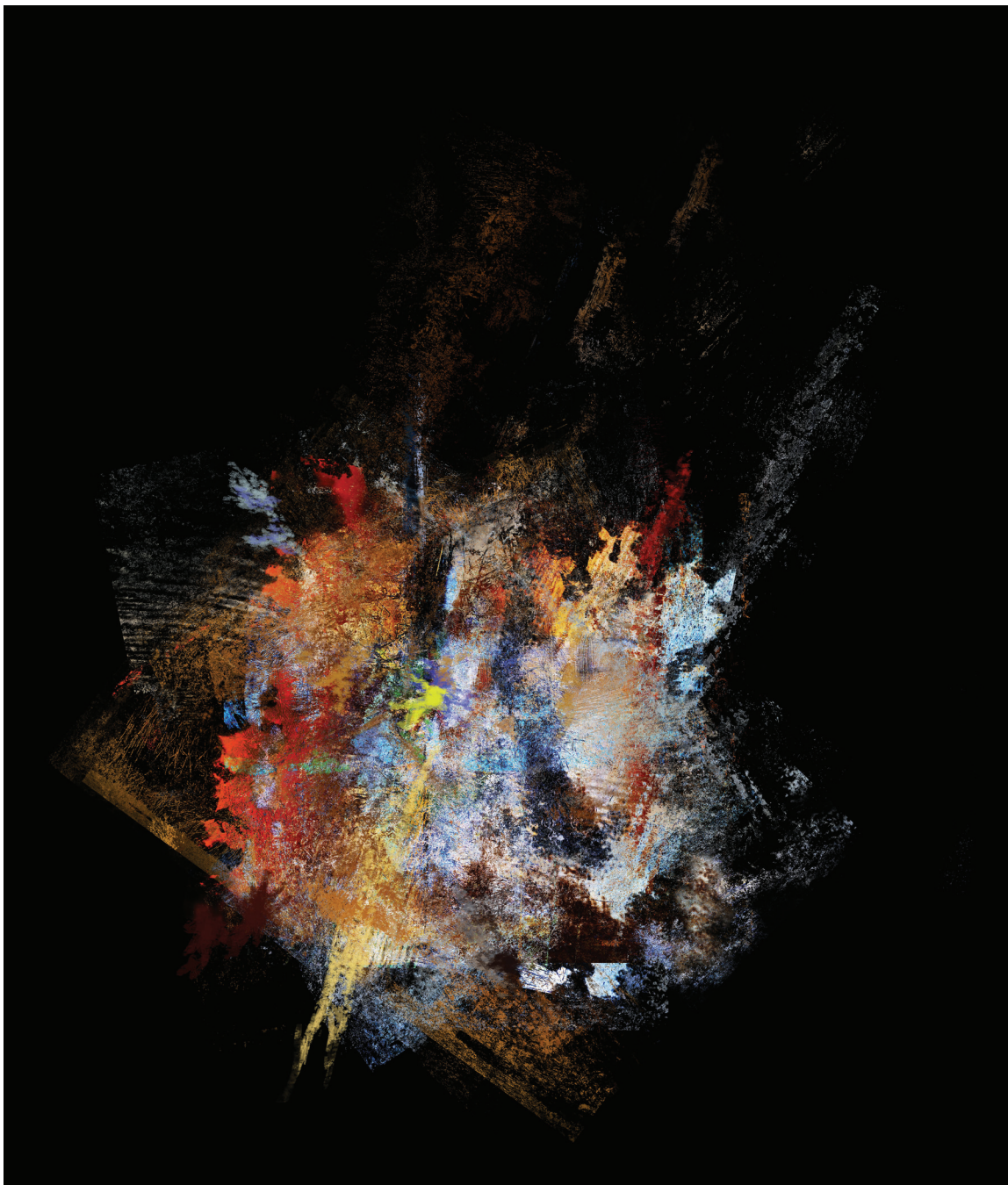
In Photoshop I copy textures, colors, and shapes that occur naturally within the trees, waves, and sand, and layer them on top of the photograph, slowly making the original disappear through this repetition. I make eraser marks and draw on the photographs, creating new textures while also enhancing the natural ones, I do this to ensure there is a balance between the new and natural marks. I then make a canvas that goes beyond the photograph to reveal the marginal markings of the many layers I made during my process.

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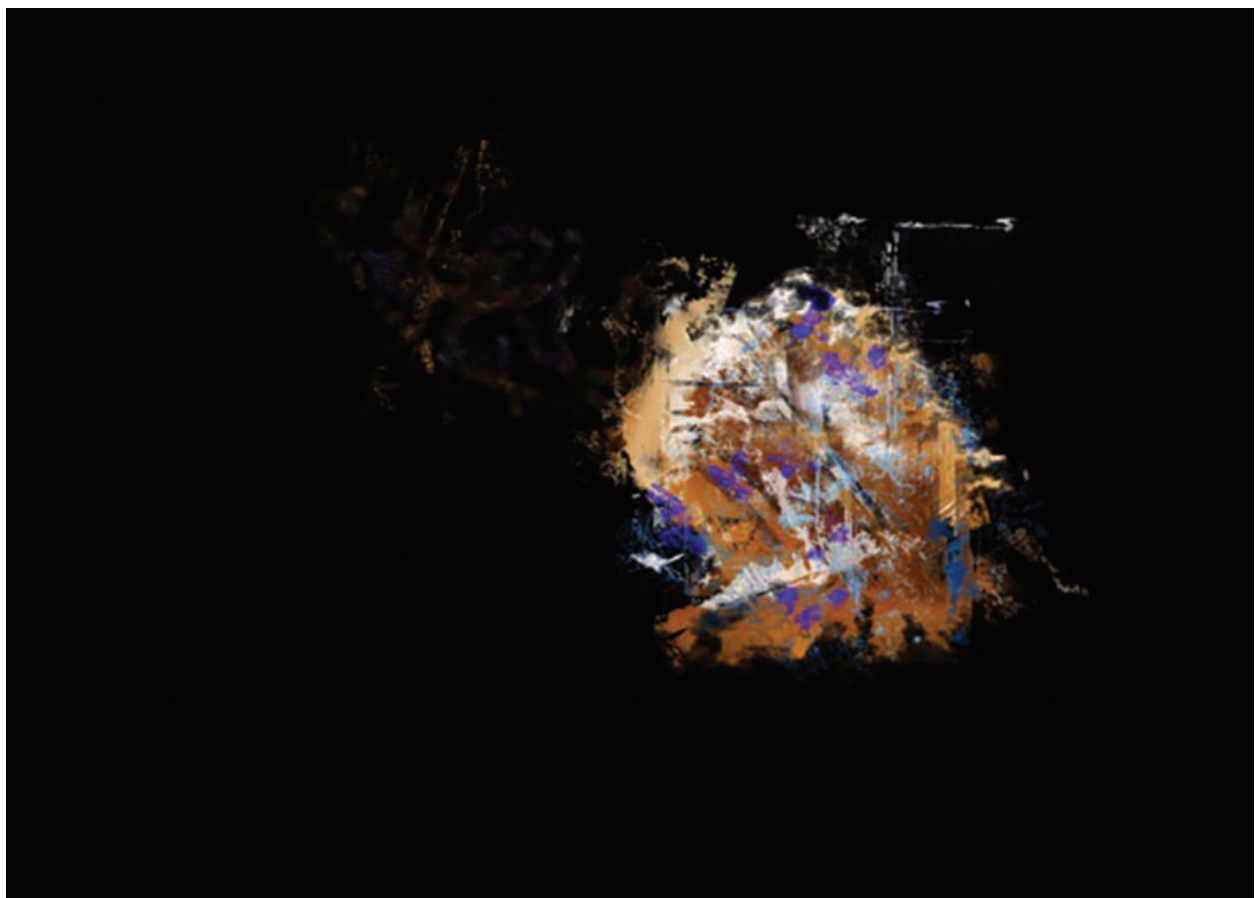
By layering, drawing, and erasing on the images, I create a kind of abstract environment that reflects the emotions I experience when looking out onto the ocean of my favorite beaches or dwelling in the scenic spots on the island: a feeling of being deeply connected to myself, a feeling of oneness, focus, and balance. I believe that this sensation comes from the projection of all my thoughts into the atmosphere, which eventually leaves me with no thoughts at all and creates cohesion with the environment and within myself. In this way, the thought process I experience on the beach is represented in the process of creating these images.

I hope that the viewer can find some of the focus and balance in these images that I find in the landscape itself.

Untitled #1, digital image, 42" x 49", 2015



Untitled #6, digital image, 35" x 25", 2015



Untitled #10, digital image, 43" x 44", 2015



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